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THE *Shadow*

DESTINATION: MOON
MAXWELL GRANT



The dim laboratory was silent.

Seconds ticked off.

A flash of white appeared from a door in the left wall. An older woman limped across the laboratory and went straight to the safe. Working the dial with easy familiarity, she opened it and made a quick study of the contents, then turned her attention to a ledgerlike book. She read every page carefully—it was essential that disguised Margo Lane would be able to report all information to her boss. The Shadow had to know the top secret, and potentially dangerous contents of this valuable book.

Suddenly the door was thrown open and the room flooded with light. Margo was caught with the ledger in her hands.

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THE *Shadow*
DESTINATION: MOON
MAXWELL GRANT

BELMONT BOOKS



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THE SHADOW DESTINATION: MOON

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Moon Down

The great rocket stood tall in the dawn sky. A giant white pillar that towered up into the morning haze of the desert that was already burning off with the growing heat of the sun. The sun itself was still hidden below the distant flat-topped mesas. Only the top of the giant white rocket glowed in the sun. On the ground below, the group of tense officials stood in the dawn shadows.

The officials, civilian and military, stared up at the great white rocket with its space capsule blended into the nose far above. They were quiet, almost grim. The sun had almost reached them when a man in military uniform looked at his watch and spoke quietly. The officials all filed to waiting vehicles. The vehicles drove off toward the distant control building set like a pillbox on the flat surface of the desert.

At the launching pad itself nothing moved now. The area around the giant rocket and its gantry was unusually cleared. Nothing blocked a clear view of the rocket, pad, and giant gantry from all sides. Nothing and no one came near the great rocket with its capsule pointed up into the now bright sunny sky above the desert. All was silent in the growing heat.

Then the rocket began to smoke—clouds of white vapor rose as its oxygen-fueled engines began to fire.

The umbilical dropped.

The gantry moved away.

Clouds of white vapor wreathed the slim white cylinder with its large spaceship capsule on the nose.

Majestically, incredibly slowly, the giant rocket began to lift.

Like some toy lifted straight up by the hand of an unseen giant, the rocket rose slowly into the air, reached a point above its gantry. It went twice as high, three times, gathered speed, began to tilt ever so slightly on its path to the stars.

The rocket never reached the stars.

Less than six hundred yards above the Earth the rocket suddenly seemed to lurch, to falter, to hesitate.

Like a silent pantomime in suspended time, the rocket seemed to stop in mid-air.

It tilted.

With a sudden lurch it tilted all the way over and fell onto its side.

Soundless, the giant rocket fell back to Earth.

It struck on its side.

There was a mighty explosion. Fire and flame shot into the hot and sunny sky. Great clouds of smoke and vapor ascended into the air. The gantry toppled from the force of the mammoth explosion. The distant control buildings shook. Windows smashed. Vehicles parked in front of the buildings were hurled over.

The great rocket lay in a twisted heap of destroyed rubble, the cloud of smoke and vapor towering into the sky.

For a time nothing moved on the base.

Then men in asbestos suits, and other men in military uniforms, began to emerge from the buildings. They righted vehicles and checked to find ones still operable. When they had found vehicles that could be used, they climbed in and began to move out toward the wreckage of the rocket.

One of the vehicles suddenly stopped. A man in the uniform of a high-ranking officer in the United States Army pointed to his left. Everyone in the vehicle looked toward where he pointed. They saw a cluster of low concrete buildings that bordered a series of low sand hills and a gulley. But it was not the buildings they stared at.

Beside one of the buildings there was a figure.

A strange, weird figure all in black.

The figure seemed to be staring toward the destroyed rocket. Even at the distance the occupants of the stopped vehicle could see that the figure wore a wide-brimmed black slouch hat. Something glowed red in the sun from the figure. Even as they watched, the figure began to turn and

float away—a shapeless figure in black that seemed to glide without feet or arms.

Two men jumped from the vehicle and raced back toward the main control building. The vehicle itself turned and drove as fast as it could toward the row of buildings where the figure had been. When they got there the figure was gone. They spread out to search the buildings and the hills and gulley beyond. Those with weapons drew them. They found nothing. There was no trace of the strange black-shrouded figure.

In the control building the alarm was sent out.

For some fifteen minutes nothing more happened. The search of the hills and gulley continued. The entire security apparatus of the NASA Base was alerted. Still there was no report and no sign of the black figure.

Then a guard was found unconscious near the tall, electrified fence of the base. The guard could remember nothing but a sudden blackout. That, and a shape vanishing over the fence.

“Whoever he is, he’s out,” one of the military men said.

The Colonel who had first seen the figure looked up at the high, electric fence. “How? How did he get over that?”

The others all stared at the towering fence.

1

ON A BACK dirt road in the desert not far from the high fence of the NASA Base, at a time just before the discovery of the unconscious guard, a black Rolls-Royce suddenly emerged from behind a low mesa where it had been completely hidden. . The car drove quickly along the road in the sun and dust. It had only one occupant—the driver who wore the grey uniform of a chauffeur.

The chauffeur drove with his eyes studying both sides of the dusty road—and a large automatic pistol on the seat beside him where he could pick it up in an instant. He drove slowly. He saw ahead a depression in the ground and a heavy clump of dry desert vegetation. The Rolls passed the clump of tough, wiry growth that masked the sloping entry into a gully.

The chauffeur did not look around. The Rolls-Royce did not slow down further from its 20 mph pace. The clump of wiry and dry bushes passed behind—and a figure sat in the back seat of the Rolls. A figure all in black who had appeared as if by some kind of eerie magic. The figure was The Shadow, and he had not appeared by magic, but by the swift and silent skills learned so long ago in the Orient.

“Drive to the highway, Stanley,” The Shadow said sharply. “I must be on the Base within five minutes.”

The chauffeur, Stanley, nodded. One of the chief agents of The Shadow, Number Two in the far-flung organization of the cloaked Avenger, Stanley did not ask questions. What The Shadow ordered was done instantly. The chauffeur-bodyguard-agent was always prepared, always efficient. He now asked only one question.

"It failed again?"

"Yes, Stanley," The Shadow intoned. "It failed again. There was no one, nothing. I could see no reason. I was observed in my escape, but neither I nor any of the officials saw anything!"

Where he sat in the back seat of the now speeding Rolls, The eyes of The Shadow blazed an angry fire. He had seen no reason for the failure of the great rocket—which meant that whatever sabotage had been done had been done long before! And The Shadow had little doubt that it had been sabotage.

"Did you observe anything, Stanley?" The Avenger asked.

"No, Chief, nothing."

"Make the complete check now," The Shadow commanded.

The cloaked Avenger sat silent in the back seat as Stanley touched a button on the dashboard. One by one the voices of The Shadow's agents reported from their posts all around the NASA Base. The piercing eyes of the Avenger were fiery as he listened. A red fire-opal girasol glowed red in a ring on his long finger. The wide brim of the slouch hat hid all but his blazing eyes and the long, sharp hawk nose. His great black cloak seemed to blend into the interior of the car.

The reports ended. No one had seen anything. Then The Shadow leaned forward.

"Harry Vincent has not reported!"

Stanley shook his head. "I get no answer from Harry."

The Shadow passed his glowing fire-opal girasol in front of a tiny instrument in the back of the front seat that looked like no more than a small tape recorder. The instrument glowed. It was the private communication system used only by The Shadow himself to call his agents. Instantly a voice seemed to be in the back seat.

"Agent Vincent. Is that you, Chief?"

"Report, Harry!"

"I've got a staff car." Vincent's voice was low. "It is parked just outside the Base. There's a Colonel in the back, and two sergeants in the front. It arrived about fifteen minutes ago. Nothing has happened, it just sits there. I'm in my truck out of sight."

"They made no attempt to enter the base?" The Shadow asked.

"No, they just seemed to sit here," Harry Vincent said. "They . . . They're starting up! They're turning around!"

"Follow them!" The Shadow commanded.

"Roger. Over and out. Report later!"

The voice was silent. The Shadow sat alone in the rear seat of the speeding Rolls-Royce.

Moments later the big car reached the highway and turned toward the gate of the NASA Base where the rocket had so recently crashed. Stanley turned to be sure that The Shadow wanted to go straight to the gate. But the Shadow was no longer in the back seat.

A stranger sat in the back seat now.

He was a smaller man, stockier and shorter than The Shadow. The new man's eyes were hooded and impassive. Quiet eyes without the fire of The Shadow. A thoughtful face without anger or any other emotion. The man wore a neat and expensive business suit, his hair was grey and close-cropped, and he had all the other aspects of a successful business man—which was exactly what he was. The man was Lamont Cranston, wealthy socialite and successful international business man who headed the wide interests of Lamont Cranston Enterprises, Inc.

He was also The Shadow!

The guise of Lamont Cranston was the major alter-ego the black-cloaked Avenger presented to the world to disguise his activities in the never-ending war against all evil. There were other alter-egos, many of them, but it was as Cranston, the close friend and fellow member of the Cobalt Club with Police Commissioner Weston of New York, that The Shadow was best known. But there were few who knew that the passive face of the amateur criminologist, Lamont Cranston, hid the power of The Shadow!

Only the members of the black-garbed Avenger's far-flung secret organization, the small but powerful army of dedicated fighters for right and justice and peace, knew that their Chief and Lamont Cranston were one and the same. There was no one on earth who knew the true identity of The Shadow—who the Avenger had been before he became The Shadow. Only two people had ever known this—The Shadow himself and his master Chen T'a Tze; the great Master who had taught the Avenger all that he knew, all his skills and powers—including the ultimate power to cloud the minds of men. A power known only to one man in each generation, and given by Chen T'a Tze before he died to The Shadow.

Now, where the quiet Lamont Cranston sat in the back seat of the Rolls-Royce approaching the gate of the NASA

Base, his impassive face covered all the powers of The Shadow—except the ultimate power. The power to cloud men's minds was of the mind, but it could only be exercised when The Shadow was The Shadow—when he wore the great black cloak, the slouch hat, the fire-opal girasol ring. The garments, passed on to The Shadow by Chen T'a Tze with the secret known only to the Master and now only to The Shadow, were hidden in their secret pockets inside the simple business suit of Cranston. No search could disclose them—and they were there ready to be used at any instant. Now they would not be used. It was Lamont Cranston who would enter the Base.

"Drive straight to the gate, Stanley," Lamont Cranston said. "They'll wonder why I am late. We will tell them that we had an unfortunate breakdown on the road. You might make some simple defect and have it checked at the Base motor pool in case they check."

"Right, Boss," Stanley said, assuming instantly his role of chauffeur and body-guard to Lamont Cranston. "Do you think that car Harry is following has something to do with all this?"

"I don't know, Stanley, but it was outside the Base for some reason. The question is, what reason, and what could it do *outside* the Base?"

"Maybe some remote control," Stanley said.

Cranston was thoughtful. "I doubt it, Stanley. That truck of Harry's is equipped to detect any remote control units. No, if they were there for any reason, it is some reason we cannot yet determine."

"Maybe they just stayed off the Base for the firing. Maybe it was just some curious Colonel," Stanley said.

"Possibly, Stanley," Cranston said. The wealthy socialite leaned forward now as the car rounded a curve and the gate was ahead. "All right, Stanley, we should have no trouble. I want you to observe everyone closely. Very closely. Be discreet, but while I'm with the officials, look around the Base as much as you can."

"Right, Boss," Stanley said as he slowed the big car at the gate where two Military Policemen held up their hands. Out of sight, visible only to The Shadow, there were two more MP's, both armed. There was also an X-ray scanner and other electronic detection equipment. Cranston studied all the security. It was not possible for anyone to get into the Base unauthorized, and yet the rocket had exploded!

Harry Vincent drove his delivery truck close enough to the staff car ahead to not lose it, but not so close as to be observed. Harry bent close over the wheel of the truck, his eyes fixed ahead to keep the staff car in sight. The staff car was driving at normal speed, neither hurrying nor going too slow. So far Harry had no reason to suspect anything but a Colonel out with his sergeant driver and another sergeant—and yet!

There was something about the staff car.

Something Harry could not pin down, but felt. It was the Colonel. The way the Colonel sat in the staff car. Harry could not put it into words, but there was something wrong. The Colonel did not sit right. Somehow, the Colonel did not sit quite the way a Colonel should in his own staff car with two sergeants. It was in the manner of the Colonel, something not quite right in the way the Colonel had talked to the two sergeants in the front seat while Harry watched from hiding when they had all been parked near the fence of the NASA Base. Harry could not have explained what he felt, he simply felt it, and it made him alert and careful as he followed the staff car across the desert of Utah.

The staff car acted suspiciously in no way. It drove steadily from the Base in the direction of Salt Lake City to the north and west. The highway stretched straight as an arrow, a white road with white dotted lines that cut across the glaring yellow clay of the desert and shimmered in the heat as if it were under water. There was little traffic, which made Harry worry that he would be spotted, but he kept a truck and a car between him and the staff car. With an occasional vehicle from the opposite direction, the four vehicles were the only traffic on the highway.

Harry was aware that the staff car up ahead could make a sudden speed-up and probably elude him before he could get around the truck and car between—but he also knew that to follow too closely was to risk almost certainly alarming them. He had to trust to luck. So far he felt he had succeeded. The staff car maintained its steady pace and its position in front of the two vehicles ahead of Harry's delivery truck. It gave no indication of any alarm, or made any attempt to evade pursuit. The chase went on, and the staff car continued straight toward Salt Lake City.

It happened when there were twenty miles to go until they reached Salt Lake City.

The long chase had lulled Harry. The road, coming now into

the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains, had begun to wind more. The procession passed through a small town set deep in a valley of the Wasatch. Harry came alert at the sight of more traffic, houses and people. Nothing happened. They passed out of the the town. Then the car between Harry and the staff car turned off into a right side road. The staff car continued on its way toward Salt Lake City, with only the truck between it and Harry's delivery truck now. Just outside the small town the highway made a sudden sharp curve—so sharp that there were warning signs. Harry saw the staff car slow properly for the dangerous curve. He prepared to slow down in turn.

The truck between him and the staff car failed to slow.

As Harry watched the staff car slow for the curve, and prepared to slow himself, he saw almost too late the danger ahead. The truck between him and the staff car took the curve too fast, swayed, swerved, skidded as the driver braked to keep from going off the road, and came to a shuddering stop slewed across the highway directly in Harry's path.

Harry jammed his brakes and lurched to a halt inches from the truck. The driver of the truck looked pale and shaken. He, the truck driver, looked down from his cab at Harry and shrugged, waved his shaking hand in a motion of apology. Harry backed off as quickly as possible, threw the truck into forward gear, and drove around the truck. Once more the truck driver waved apology, and bent to restart his stalled engine. Harry neither took notice of the apologetic wave, nor hesitated. He jammed his accelerator down to the floor and roared around the curve after the staff car. The curve wound for a quarter of a mile and then suddenly debouched onto a long straightaway. Harry smiled and peered ahead—the staff car could not have escaped out of sight yet. Harry searched the long straight road with his eyes.

The staff car was not in sight.

Harry raced on and stared ahead.

The road was deserted except for a car coming toward him and a trailer truck plodding along a mile ahead.

Harry blinked and stared as he drove.

It was not possible.

The staff car had vanished into thin air. Harry slowed now and looked for side roads. There were none. Far ahead the trailer truck moved steadily on its way and the rest of the shimmering road was empty in the heat.

Harry turned back and drove very slowly observing the edge of the highway. There was no sign of any tire marks, and tire marks would have shown clearly in the soft dust of the shoulder of the highway.

There were no side roads all the way back to the curve.

Harry realized that, somehow, he had been outwitted. The staff car must have spotted him after all, and had its escape all set up. Harry turned back again. He had noticed that the truck that had had the "accident" had not reappeared. Now he was sure he had been fooled. But how? He drove all the way to Salt Lake City without seeing anything more than a few trailer trucks and cars he had no interest in. He reached the city and stopped on the outskirts. It was only then that he saw in his mind the empty road and the lone trailer truck—and knew how he had been fooled.

Lamont Cranston, admitted to the Utah Base of NASA without trouble on his special pass, left his Rolls-Royce and Stanley outside the heavily-guarded main control building. The quiet and impassive socialite and industrialist entered the building and was conducted along the windowless halls. The hum of the air-conditioning conflicted with a steady hubub of voices that seemed to fill the corridors. Men walked quickly and with grim faces. There was an air of disaster, and yet not the kind of stunned aura that would have greeted a disaster so large had it been totally unexpected. No, the grim men of NASA moved with the purpose of men who had not been totally unprepared for what had happened.

Cranston watched and listened behind his impassive eyes. His guide brought him at last to an unmarked door where two gimlet-eyed MP's were stationed outside. Cranston waited while his guide handed his credentials to the two guards. The MP's inspected the documents with great care. Then they stepped aside and one of them opened the door. Cranston went in alone—his guide, and the two guards, were not authorized to enter this room! Cranston stood for a moment inside the door and surveyed the scene. He studied the faces of the men in the room seated around the long conference table. Men with worried eyes and faces that showed the evidence of little sleep and less sleep to come. Cranston knew them all—every man of them deeply involved in the entire project. But he knew one man in particular—a tall, distinguished man who now looked up and

saw Cranston. The man jumped up and came toward Cranston. It was Commissioner Ralph Weston of the New York City Police.

"Lamont! Where the devil have you been! Have you . . ."

Weston began, his handsome face pale and drawn now.

"We had a breakdown," Cranston said quietly. "I apologize."

Weston waved a fine hand. "But you heard?"

Cranston nodded. "I heard. I heard the explosion. I guessed what had happened, Commissioner."

"Again!" a tall, thin man dressed in the uniform of an Air Force General said.

"Sabotage!" a civilian said. "It has to be sabotage. There is no other possible explanation!"

"Damn it, but how?" A short, heavy civilian cried. "How?"

One man, a lantern-jawed and taciturn man in civilian clothes but with a distinct military bearing, had said nothing as yet. He had sat in his seat half way down the long table and watched Cranston. Now his grey eyes narrowed to steel points. He spoke to Cranston.

"A breakdown? On the road? In your Rolls, Cranston?"

Cranston nodded. "I'm afraid so. My chauffeur is having it checked now."

The man continued to watch Cranston. "Unfortunate. Strange that you were the only invited observer not here at the time."

"You can check me, Major Oates," Cranston said evenly. "I quite understand your concern. It's your job to check. Feel free. As a matter of fact, I wonder about a Rolls breaking down myself. My chauffeur is abnormally efficient."

The tall civilian rose to Cranston's bait. "Sabotage? Why not. Cranston is a trained observer and an industrialist! He might have seen something."

Cranston smiled. "I doubt it, Doctor Cassill, but I am a supplier of the Project, or my companies are, and I should have been here to check out my products for you."

It was at this point that the giant man at the head of the long table spoke for the first time. He wore the uniform of an Army Major General, and his voice was low and rough.

"Cranston is here. Now I suggest we get back to the point. Project Full Moon has failed again! We have lost three of our best astronauts! Gentlemen, we must find the cause—and the reason! We must be first to the Moon, and there is

damned little time! What happened out there today—and why?"

The silence in the room was as deathly as the silence of the final grave.

2

CRANSTON WALKED quietly to his chair and sat down. In the thick silence his hooded eyes continued to study the men in the room. He ran them down in his mind. First the giant man in the uniform of a Major General. Cranston knew him well: Major General George Broyard, commandant of the NASA Utah Base for Special Project Full Moon. The General was a famed soldier, a well-known man of science, and a capable administrator.

The tall civilian to the right of General Broyard was known to Cranston by sight: Doctor J. P. Cassill, Senior NASA Scientist at the Utah Base. Cassill was a nervous man, quick to jump to conclusions outside his field of science. But the Senior Scientist was a first rate man of science and a fair administrator.

The lantern-jawed man with the grey and cold eyes Cranston had met twice before. Dressed now in civilian clothes as befitted his work, he was nevertheless an Army Major—Major John Oates of the Central Intelligence Agency, assigned to the problems at the Utah Base. A man who now had his hands full and did not seem to have had much sleep in recent weeks. Cranston could well understand that. Oates was still watching the socialite. The CIA man was now seeing saboteurs under every rock.

The tall man in Air Force blue was Brigadier General Calvin Rogers. Cranston knew Rogers only slightly—a soldier who had made a hard record in his early flying days in the Korean War, later in Viet Nam, but who was a poor administrator and something of a fish out of water as a General. Rogers owed his present position to one accidental fact,

he was a crony of the President ever since Korean days. Now he was a special military assistant, and was at the Utah Base as the personal representative of the President. Cranston did not like Rogers. The General had a way of calling for immediate action when thought was really needed.

Finally, not including Commissioner Weston and Cranston himself, there was the civilian who had first used the word—sabotage. A small, heavy man with deep-set eyes, this was Professor Stanley Farina the world-famed American rocket expert. It was Farina who had mothered the entire rocket project, and the Professor was not about to admit that there could be anything wrong with his baby, hence it had to be sabotage.

That was the company in the locked and guarded room of the Utah Base, with Weston and Cranston himself, and now they all sat in the grim silence that had settled on the room after the blunt speech of General Broyard. It was Professor Farina who first found his voice.

"Why, I can't guess, General," the small, heavy Professor said, "but I do know that it must be sabotage of some kind. I have tested every piece of equipment, there could be no failure of a type to cause the rocket to abort so completely."

"Security was total, absolute," Major Oates said. "This time there could have been no sabotage on the Base."

"There had to be," Farina said.

"No," Oates said.

Broyard growled. The General seemed ready to explode as he listened to the bickering. But General Rogers beat him to it.

"Yeh? What about that guy in black? I saw him, I chased him with Colonel Ames. He got on the Base," Rogers said.

"Maybe," Oates said, "but not near the rocket."

"Hell, how do you know? What are you, a computer? I say security was lax and all we have to do is tighten up!" Rogers said belligerently.

Cassill soothed. "Now, now, gentlemen. The question is not who was lax, if anyone, but what happened and how do we stop it! This is the fourth failure! And this time. . ."

The Senior Scientist stopped. Everyone was silent. General Broyard said the tragic words.

"This time we lost three men." The General's eyes flashed in his giant frame. "We should not have sent men knowing

there had been trouble. Yet we had to! We must be first on the Moon, and we know too well that the Reds are close to us. We can't wait! Wait! We must know what happened out there today, and what happened the other three times we failed!"

"Security was total," Major Oates said.

"The rocket was perfect," Professor Farina said.

"The Base personnel are above suspicion," Dr. Cassill said. "Checked and triple checked."

General Broyard roared. "Something happened, damn it!"

They all looked like small boys caught in some forbidden act. This was the fourth time. What could they say? Even the confident General Rogers had nothing to say now. He chewed on a long, thin cigar and looked uncomfortable. Cassill sighed sadly. Professor Farina was red-faced, his beloved rockets had failed him somehow. Major Oates showed nothing, but the corners of his steely grey eyes twitched faintly. The Major clearly knew that he was the one under principal attack; he was Security. Commissioner Weston, who had taken no part in the talk, looked at Cranston. Behind his impassive eyes Cranston was thinking.

"What puzzled me," Cranston said slowly, "is that I was under the impression that the Moon landing was still at least three years away. You all seem to be very imperative about the need for speed."

Cassill looked at Broyard. Major Oates narrowed his nostrils. Only Professor Farina seemed pleased. Broyard nodded to Cassill.

"Tell him, we got him here," the General snapped.

Cassill faced Cranston. "The Moon landing was at least two years away—until six months ago." The Senior Scientist of the Full Moon Project leaned forward, his eyes bright. "Then, six months ago, we got a remarkable new fuel control system. It was just developed, it's top secret. I can't reveal any details, you understand, but it advanced us by two years or more! That was why we shifted to this Base and started the Special Project Full Moon. As you know, the regular project is still going down at Cape Kennedy. We wanted Full Moon to be absolutely secret, a little surprise for our Soviet friends and the world."

Cassill stopped, looked around, sighed. "All went well at first. We thought we were ready. We launched our first unmanned shot—it failed. We tried two more unmanned, all

failed. But everything was ready and seemed perfect. So we took a gamble and today was to have been the actual first landing on the Moon by men. And. . .”

“It failed,” Cranston said quietly.

Cassill nodded.

“And now?” Cranston said.

There was a silence again. Broyard was grim.

“Now we try again,” the General said. “We have to.”

General Rogers snorted. “After this? You’ll try without knowing what happened? I say we hold off until we know more. I’m going to advise the President just that way.”

Cranston said quietly, “What do we know about the four failures so far?”

“Nothing,” General Broyard said.

“The rockets were totally destroyed,” Professor Farina said. “I am still trying to trace the failure of the last three.”

“The theory checks out absolutely perfectly,” Dr. Cassill said.

Cranston looked at Major Oates.

“Security was impenetrable the last two times, Cranston,” the CIA Major said. “There is only one possibility—sabotage at one of our suppliers. As you know, I’m checking that out with a fine-toothed comb.”

Cranston nodded. “I know, my plants are riddled with CIA men. So far nothing?”

Oates shook his head. “Nothing except one little oddity. We checked back on everything. Absolutely nothing is out of order except for one small mistake that was corrected.”

“A mistake?” Weston said quickly. The Commissioner was a trained law officer, he knew the value of any deviation from normal no matter how small.

“Just a slip, Commissioner,” Oates explained. “One shipment of control parts from Federal Cybernetics, Inc. came late. It had been mislabeled for some town in Idaho. It had not been opened or tampered with in any way.”

“Federal Cybernetics?” Cranston said. “That’s Wesley Bryan’s company.”

“Do you know him, Cranston?” Cassill said.

“I’ve met him. Once, before his accident,” Cranston said.

“A genius,” Cassill said.

Cranston nodded. “Yes, a genius. Is his material very vital?”

“Some of it,” Professor Farina said.

“The mislabeled shipment was routine though,” Oates

said. "Still, I'm checking it closely. So far it seems to be a simple clerical error."

Cranston nodded. But behind his impassive eyes his brain was working with the speed of the mind of The Shadow. He, too, knew the importance of the smallest deviation.

General Calvin Rogers was not a man who cared about small deviations. The tall Air Force Brigadier and friend of the President waved his thin cigar like some weapon.

"Clerical errors! Damn it, man, we've got to get to the Moon! And we won't do a damned bit of good sitting here chewing our cud! I'm going to report to the President and we'll throw a whole division around this base if we have to. That man in black, there's our villian! Why search for the needle when it's all as clear as the nose on your face? We saw an intruder, the rocket failed. Just add them up, two and two, and you've got your answer."

Rogers glared around at all the others. There was another silence. General Broyard stood up.

"It's possible that General Rogers is right this time. Perhaps we are making the simple complicated. In any event, we are doing no good here. I suggest we get down to our respective jobs at once. Meanwhile, I'll personally start a full search for that man in black."

There was general agreement. Even Weston nodded approval. Cranston sat impassively, but his mind was busy. Knowing, as the others did not, that the man in black was himself, he did not have to think about the man in black. But *something* had sabotaged the Moon rocket.

Cranston wondered what Harry Vincent had learned on the highway.

Harry Vincent drove slowly all through Salt Lake City. He did not find the trailer truck. It had come to him in a single flash exactly what had happened. The staff car could not have had time to escape. It had not turned off the highway. It could not vanish into thin air. Therefore it had to be still there on the highway—but disguised somehow. And he remembered the trailer truck.

Harry felt angry with himself. It had stared him in the face. The first truck had blocked him and given the staff car time to drive into the trailer of the trailer truck!

And Harry had missed it.

The whole thing had been planned—which meant two things to Harry. That the staff car occupants had spotted

him. And that whatever they had been doing outside the gates of the NASA Base had been something they did not want known. They were almost certainly not a Colonel and two Sergeants, but imposters there for some specific purpose.

The question was—what purpose *outside* the gates?

Harry could not answer that question, and he could not find the trailer truck. He had really known that it was hopeless, but he felt so guilty at letting the staff car outwit him that he had decided to look before reporting. Now he had to report. He drove to a secluded part of the city and parked the delivery truck out of sight. He bent over his small two-way radio disguised as a part of the dashboard. The small replica of The Shadow's fire-opal girasol glowed on his finger as he passed it over the unit.

"Come in Chief. Agent Harry Vincent reporting. Come in Chief."

There was a faint click and a voice entered the cab of the delivery truck.

"Stanley here, Harry. The Chief is just coming out of the conference. Stand-by."

In the silence of his truck, Harry Vincent waited to make his report to The Shadow.

Lamont Cranston sat in the back seat of the Rolls-Royce as it drove out of the gate of the Utah Base. He smiled at the guards. Stanley drove with eyes straight ahead as befitted a good chauffeur. But he watched his special rearview mirror to be sure that no one followed the Rolls. When they were clear of the gate and driving down the highway, Cranston touched his tiny two-way radio set in the back seat.

"All right, Harry, report now," Cranston said quietly.

The voice of Harry Vincent explained all that had happened. Cranston listened. His impassive face showed no expression or emotion, but as Harry got to the incident of the truck that had blocked him, the eyes of the socialite flashed once with the fire of The Shadow.

"And obvious prearranged plan," Cranston snapped.

Harry was contrite. "I know, Chief, I was stupid. When I got around the curve the staff car was gone. It was in that trailer truck, I'm sure of it."

"So am I," Cranston said. "Which means that they spotted you, that they were up to something outside the Base, and that they have an efficient organization! I think we're getting

somewhere. At least we now know that there are some strangers involved, they have exposed themselves that far."

"But I lost them, Chief," Harry's voice said sadly.

Cranston was grim. "We'll find them again, Harry. At the moment we have made the first step—we know that someone is aware of these failures, they are not accidents! Now, Harry, I want you to describe the men in that staff car."

Harry described the men.

"Good," Cranston said. "Remain in Salt Lake City. Check all airports, buses, trains. Check the hotels. See if you can locate any trace of them."

"Yes, Chief," Harry said.

Cranston clicked off and sat back thoughtfully in the back seat of the Rolls-Royce. Stanley had already reported that he had found nothing suspicious whatsoever on the Base. So far, the only faint clues were the mysterious staff car and the mislabeled shipment from Federal Cybernetics, Inc. It was not much, but it was a start. Something had destroyed the rocket shots. One big question refused to leave the mind of the socialite and alter-ego of The Shadow.

"Why, Stanley?" Cranston said as the big car raced on along the highway. "Why would anyone want to sabotage the Full Moon Project? Who gains?"

"The Russians?" Stanley said without turning around.

Cranston nodded. "It almost has to be. And yet . . . ? What would they really gain? Think of the risk. They were very concerned with world opinion. And, again, how could they do it? We have a fairly good watch on the Russians. The CIA would be alert. Still, I suppose they could do it if it were important enough."

"First on the Moon," Stanley said from the front seat. "Maybe they heard about the new fuel control and figured they were licked unless they sabotaged Full Moon."

"Yes, that has to be it," Cranston said. "The question is how are they doing it? To stop them we have to know how they are sabotaging the program without anyone being on the Base."

"Federal Cybernetics?" Stanley said.

Cranston's hooded eyes narrowed where he sat in the back seat of the speeding Rolls-Royce. The passive eyes flashed suddenly. Then Cranston bent toward his small, disguised two-way radio. "Yes, Stanley, we will start with Federal Cybernetics."

The socialite alter-ego of The Shadow touched a switch and waited. A cold, precise voice seemed to be in the back seat.

"Burbank," the cold voice announced. It was the voice of the Communications Agent of The Shadow, a voice that spoke from the hidden blue-lighted room high above Park Avenue in New York City that was the communications heart of the Avenger's work—a blue room that Burbank never left while on duty.

Cranston spoke sharply. "Instructions follow."

There was a faint click as the automatic tape machine in the distant blue room went on to make a permanent record of the instructions of The Shadow.

"Ready, Chief," Burbank's voice said.

Cranston began to talk as the big car raced on along the highway in the blazing Utah sun.

3

THE BUILDINGS and central laboratory of Federal Cybernetics, Inc. were located on the outskirts of New York City near the town of Hempstead. It was a complex of four low buildings, all one-story except the main office building which had two stories, set in the center of a wide and neat parklike grounds with a well-kept expanse of green lawn and many trees and shrubs. A high cyclone fence surrounded the grounds, nothing on the building identified it, and there were guards on the single gate in the fence. Unknown to anyone but the Security people and the President of the company, there was a complex and efficient electronic security system that included alarms, scanners to detect any objects going in or out of the plant or lab, coded detectors to authenticate all badges worn by personnel or visitors, and a complete computer file of the full labor force.

On an evening two days after the fourth failure of the Full Moon Project rocket launch, the production areas were working at top capacity on the complicated electronic equipment made by the company. The research laboratory staff was as busy as ever on the future projects of the company. In the main research laboratory the company's Chief of Research, Dr. Max Ernest, sat alone completing his progress report for the work of the day. The office of the Research Chief was a glassed-in cubicle set in the corner of the laboratory farthest from the entrance. Two closet doors were in the wall, both locked for classified material. There was a small but strong safe behind Ernest's desk. The Doctor was working with great concentration as the day became evening and the work slowed to a halt. Ernest did not hear the approach of

his employer until he opened the door of the glassed cubicle. Then Ernest looked up, saw his boss, and leaped to his feet to help.

"Don't jump up like a jack-in-the-box all the time, Max!"

Dr. Ernest reddened. "Sorry, Mr. Bryan. I just. . ."

"I know what you just," J. Wesley Bryan snapped testily. "But I can maneuver perfectly well as I've tried to impress on you."

J. Wesley Bryan, President and sole owner of Federal Cybernetics, Inc., was a small, sharp-faced man who sat and moved in a wheel chair. Impeccably dressed in a simple business suit, Bryan looked like a grey mouse in his motorized chair. There were no outward signs of the injuries that confined him to the chair, and his sharp black eyes snapped with a very un-mouselike fire. He maneuvered his chair, as he had said, with amazing agility, helped by the complex electronic controls of his own design. Now he wheeled to the desk where Dr. Max Ernest had sat down again. Bryan glanced at the report Ernest was working on, and then his piercing eyes looked at the Research Chief.

"Has the shipment gone?"

Ernest nodded. "Yes, two hours ago."

"Good," Bryan said. The tiny man rubbed his thin hands together. "So, we are almost at the end, or should I say the beginning? Yes, the beginning by all means." Bryan's black eyes snapped at Ernest. "You heard about the failure at Full Moon again? Do they have anything to report?"

"I'm expecting Farina any minute. I imagine he'll give the details if he has any," Dr. Ernest said.

"So? He comes here? Perhaps they have found something wrong in the fuel control after all?" Bryan said, a certain look of worry on his face now.

Ernest shook his head. "Impossible. The control is perfect. They made every possible test that we did not."

"You are sure?"

"Of course!" Ernest said.

Bryan watched his Research Chief. "Perhaps, but I think I will do some work myself. I'd rather not see Farina anyway. The key?"

Dr. Ernest got up and walked to the small but powerful safe. He worked the combination dial. The safe opened and the Research Chief took out a key. He handed it to Bryan and closed the safe. Bryan took the key and wheeled to one of the doors clearly labeled: *Storage*. The President of Federal

Cybernetics took a second key from his pocket. With each key he unlocked part of the same lock—inserting each key in turn into the same keyhole. He replaced both keys in his waistcoat pocket and swung open the door. He wheeled in and the door closed behind him.

When the door had been open anyone who had seen the interior would have seen—a closet with shelves of papers and bottles!

Dr. Max Ernest returned to his desk and went on with his report. Some ten minutes later, less than a half an hour before five o'clock, the intercom buzzed on Ernest's desk. The Research Director flipped his speak switch.

"Yes?"

"Professor Stanley Farina to see you sir," a female voice announced.

"Send him in," Ernest said.

The Research Director leaned back in his chair and waited. A smile wreathed his face as the small, stocky rocket expert from the NASA Utah Base entered his office. Farina smiled in return. The two men shook hands cordially. Ernest waved Farina to a chair in front of the desk and offered the rocket man a cigar. Farina declined. After his initial smile, Farina's face had set in a deep and worried frown. He looked at the Research Chief.

"You heard, Max?"

Ernest nodded. "I heard. The fourth time. I just can't figure it, Stanley. Is there any chance that it has anything to do with the fuel control?"

"Not that I can determine," Farina said. "Or anyone else."

Ernest was thoughtful. "Still, the fuel control is the only really new piece of equipment. Everything else has always worked well. Mr. Bryan is concerned. He counts a great deal on the fuel control being perfect."

"We're checking it out again, Max, but I'm sure its okay. You have all my tests reports. It should work perfectly. All the tests you couldn't make we did with our full facilities," Farina said. The small rocket expert frowned again. "It has to be sabotage, Max. I think we all know that now. There is no other explanation. Even Oates and Commissioner Weston have to agree after this failure."

"You're sure? I find it hard to think who would sabotage Project Full Moon. After all, its not a military project. The Soviet, the British, the French, have all cooperated. We've even promised them the fuel control if it works out. What can

they gain? The United States has already agreed to an 'open' Moon. I simply don't understand. Do you?"

Farina shook his head. "No, I don't. And no one else does either. A man named Cranston was with us, he's a trained criminologist, and he can't understand why we would be sabotaged."

"Lamont Cranston?" Ernest said. "Of Lamont Cranston Enterprises? He supplies you too, doesn't he?"

"Yes, two of his companies do," Farina said. "Do you know him?"

Ernest nodded. "Yes, but only by sight and reputation. He is a powerful man, very clever."

Farina narrowed his eyes as he watched Dr. Ernest. There was a momentary silence in the glassed-in office. Outside, in the main laboratory, the workers were clearing their benches in preparation for the end of the day. Farina's voice was low when he spoke again.

"You're not suggesting that Cranston might be behind the sabotage?"

Max Ernest shook his head. "No, not really. It is impossible to believe; a man of his reputation. Still, he does have a close access to many vital parts."

"True," Farina said. "But so do you."

Ernest smiled. "*Touché*, I do indeed. And, I might add, so do you, Stanley."

Farina sighed. "That's the trouble—there are a lot of possible suspects, but not one you can really accuse. Besides, no one was near the Base."

"Except Cranston," Ernest said.

"Yes, except Cranston—who was late to arrive!" Farina said. "I wonder?"

"So do I," Max Ernest said.

At this moment, unseen by Farina, a small light glowed beneath the desk of Dr. Max Ernest. Ernest gave no hint of the existence of the small light, or of the fact that he had seen it. Instead he smiled at Farina, and then casually stood up.

"Maybe we had better make one more check of the production line, Stanley. Just to be sure. It will take some hours, but the line will shut down soon, and we can take it step by step. With such delicate work we only work the eight hours with two shifts. Four hours a man is all we dare let them work. After that the margin of error becomes too high."

Farina nodded wearily. "We better be sure. I've got a long session with Oates soon."

Dr. Ernest led Farina from the glassed-in office and across the now deserted laboratory. They went out into the main hall of the laboratory building. The door closed behind them. For a time there was only silence in the dim laboratory. All the workers had gone, the desks and benches were clean and bare of all but the experiments that could not be stopped. These lengthy experiments went on untended, the solutions and equipment like some mysterious landscape in the darkened laboratory. All was still and silent. Then there was a sound. It came from the empty office of Dr. Ernest.

The door that was so clearly labeled, *Storage*, now opened and the wheel chair of J. Wesley Bryan came out. The chair, on rubber wheels and with ball-bearings, made almost no sound as it glided across the office. The light under the desk of Dr. Max Ernest had now gone out. Bryan sat in his chair in the silent office for a few moments. His quick black eyes studied the office and the dim laboratory outside through the glass walls. Then he wheeled to the safe and opened it. He took out a large ledger-type book and slowly made an entry. He closed the book and returned it to the safe. Then the small, mouse-like man wheeled around and propelled himself out of the office and across the deserted laboratory. He stopped once to closely inspect an experiment that was proceeding automatically on a bench. Bryan studied it, made a small adjustment, nodded with the satisfaction of the scientist who sees an experiment proceeding well, and wheeled himself to the door and out into the corridor.

Again there was silence in the laboratory.

It was some five minutes before anything moved in the laboratory again. A man seemed to rise up from the dim light itself. He came from inside a long laboratory bench and stood up in the dimness. He was a small, dark-haired, wiry man of middle age. He wore the white laboratory coat of a senior research chemist over his business suit. He was, in fact, one of the men Dr. Ernest had been observing at work in the laboratory some hours earlier. Now he stood motionless for a time, and then he moved quickly and without hesitation across the laboratory and into the glassed-in office of Dr. Ernest. There he looked around for a moment. He walked quickly to the door marked *Storage*, and stood looking at it. It was clear that he had seen J. Wesley Bryan come out of the door. He studied it for a time, and then tried to open

it. The door was locked. The small man rubbed his chin. Then he turned with a nod of his head and went to the small safe. He bent down over it. His fingers worked deftly, his ear close to the dial, and he neither saw nor heard the faint sound out in the laboratory. For a second, if he had looked, he might have seen a flash of white. But he did not look, and the flash of white was gone as soon as it had appeared.

The man sat back, the safe swung open. Crouched on his heels, the man took out the contents of the safe and studied each of them carefully one by one. He put everything back except the ledgerlike book that J. Wesley Bryan had made an entry in. The man opened this ledger and very slowly turned the pages. After a time he began to frown; he leaned over the pages and seemed to study them intently. Then he became suddenly excited. He stared at the open pages of the ledger. Finally he began to nod, his eyes highly excited. He took a tiny camera from his pocket and began to photograph the pages one by one. Not all the pages, only certain ones. The job completed, the wiry man put the camera back into his pocket, returned all the material to the safe, and closed the safe. He stood up, looked around the office of Ernest again, then walked to the door and out into the main room of the laboratory. He crossed the laboratory, looked all around, and went out the same door as Bryan into the corridor.

For the third time the dim laboratory was silent.

Seconds ticked off.

Minutes.

The flash of white appeared again. It came from a door to the left. Not the door into the corridor which was on the right of the laboratory, but the door in the left wall that was simply marked: Women's Locker Room. The white was another laboratory coat that emerged from the Women's Locker Room. The coat was worn by an older blonde woman who limped perceptibly as she crossed the laboratory toward the office of Dr. Max Ernest. She was clearly a woman about fifty, not tall, and her face was heavily lined with years of close work bending over experiments in laboratories. She, too, was one of the research personnel of the laboratory. As she limped across the laboratory her quick eyes were alert for any movement, any intrusion. She entered the office of Ernest but did not waste time trying the door of the room marked *Storage*. It was plain that the woman had been observing the wiry man as he worked in what he

thought was an empty laboratory. She went straight to the safe and bent down over it.

She manipulated the dial, again in a manner that proved that she had observed the combination worked out by the small, wiry man. She did not hesitate, nor did she place her ear to the dial to hear the tumblers. She turned the dial like one who knew the combination. The safe opened. She reached in and made a quick study of the contents, and then turned her full attention to the ledger-like book Bryan had made his entries in, and the wiry man had become so excited about. Some time passed as the woman studied the ledger page by page. From time to time she stopped to read a page more closely. Her lined and middle-aged face showed considerable puzzlement as she read. Once or twice she seemed to stare at something and think hard. She read every page in the book, and when she closed it at last she stood and stared off into the space of the silent laboratory for some minutes. Then she returned the book and all the other material to the safe, closed the safe, and went back out into the main room of the laboratory. As she recrossed the laboratory toward the door of the Women's Locker Room, she suddenly darted for cover behind a dim bench.

She had heard a sound in the corridor.

She crouched out of sight.

The door into the corridor opened. A man in the grey uniform of a company security guard looked into the laboratory. He carried a time clock. He went to the laboratory time station and used the key to mark his time clock. He looked around once more. Then he went back to the door and out into the corridor.

The woman scientist stood up and stared after the guard for a moment. Then she turned quickly and limped to the door into the Women's Locker Room. Inside the locker room she moved down the rows of benches and dimly seen lockers. She went to the last row of lockers, turned and walked down the aisle until she reached the corner of the locker room directly beneath a high window. There she sat on the bench and bent over her left hand. She began to speak low and soft. Her voice was not the voice of a woman of fifty.

In fact, ever since she had entered the locker room there had been a sudden and remarkable transformation. She had seemed to become taller, straighter. The limp had vanished as she walked quickly through the locker room. Her entire manner and movement had seemed to shed twenty years,

to become the quick, smooth and sure movements of a young woman. Even her lined face had appeared to become younger. Her clear eyes had assumed a sharp and purposeful look as she turned into the last aisle and sat on the bench under the window in the dim corner of the locker room. Now her voice was low, crisp and efficient as she spoke directly into a small ring she wore on her left hand.

“Margo reporting. Come in Control Central. Agent Lane reporting from Federal Cybernetics. Come in Chief.”

In her disguise as the crippled and middle-aged woman chemist, Margo Lane sat and listened for her reply. Margo, the secretary to Lamont Cranston and Number One agent of The Shadow, waited in the silent locker room for her Chief to answer.

4

IN THE HAZY and shifting shadows of the hidden blue-lighted room nothing seemed to move at first. A room that did not officially exist, it was one of the concealed complex of rooms behind the elegant offices of Lamont Cranston Enterprises in the Park Avenue office building high above the city of New York. The Headquarters of the organization of The Shadow, the heart of the Avenger's far-flung battle against all evil, the complex of secret blue rooms was unknown to anyone but the immediate members of The Shadow's small army. Now silent and empty, a space of dim blue light without walls or ceiling, it suddenly echoed to the voice of Margo Lane.

"Margo reporting. Come in Control Central. Agent Lane reporting from Federal Cybernetics. Come in Chief."

There was a faint sound.

The blue shadows seemed to swirl and darken.

The black-shrouded shape of The Shadow appeared as if from out of the light itself and glided in silence to a small compact communications console that emerged from the hazy blue light. The cloaked Avenger bent over the instrument, his piercing eyes fiery above his scythe-like nose. The fire-opal girasol glowed blood-red on his long finger as he touched the controls of the console. His voice was low and strong.

"Report!"

The distant voice of Margo could have been in the blue room itself.

"All laboratory routine normal until some half an hour before work ended. At that time J. Wesley Bryan entered the

office of Research Director Max Ernest. They talked, I could not tell exactly what about. By reading lips I gathered they discussed the failure of Full Moon; and the necessity to complete it as soon as possible. Bryan appears especially anxious to have Full Moon succeed. After they talked a few minutes, Bryan used a double key to enter a closet marked *Storage*. One of the keys was in Ernest's safe, the other Bryan carried on his person. Bryan went into the closet and did not return for some time."

The Shadow's eyes snapped. "A closet? Could you determine what is actually behind that door?"

"No," Margo's voice said, "but from what I read on their lips I would guess that it is some kind of private laboratory."

The Avenger was silent for a moment. "Bryan is a known scientific genius, it would be probable that he would have a private laboratory of his own. He would also probably keep it locked. In itself it means little, Margo. Still, we will have to investigate that secret room. Proceed."

Margo's voice continued its calm report. "Soon after Bryan went through the door, Professor Stanley Farina visited Dr. Ernest. Again. . ."

The Shadow said, "Farina? Did you read their conversation?"

"Partly," Margo said from the dim and silent locker room, her voice coming softly into the blue room where The Shadow listened. "They spoke mostly about the failure of the shot at Utah Base. Farina appears confused, he insists it is sabotage. Ernest is not sure. They discussed the possibility of Lamont Cranston being involved. Ernest appeared to know Cranston quite well."

"Who suggested Cranston as a possible saboteur?" The Shadow asked.

"The first suggestion seemed to come from Dr. Ernest," Margo said where she sat bent over her ring in the dim locker room.

"Go on," The Shadow said.

"After a time Dr. Ernest suggested that he and Farina go to check the fuel control production line to be absolutely sure that all was well and functioning correctly. Farina agreed, and they left the office. By this time the entire laboratory had emptied and been shut for the night. I waited until the Women's Locker Room had cleared, and then took up position at the door to observe the laboratory. After a

short time, Bryan came out of the door marked *Storage*. He opened the safe and wrote in a book. He returned the book to the safe and left the office. He stopped to examine and adjust an experiment in the lab before he went out of the lab. . ."

In the hazy blue silence of the hidden blue room high above the city, The Shadow listened closely to the report of his Number One agent. His eyes flashed as she described the appearance of the wiry scientist, and his searching actions. When she reached the part where he photographed the pages of the ledger, The Shadow interrupted again.

"He seemed excited?" The Avenger asked.

"Yes. Excited and a little puzzled. He seemed to feel that he had discovered something important but was not sure what it was."

"Do you know who he is?"

"Only that his name is Otto Reigen, he is a senior scientist. His record shows that he made a recent trip to Germany. In fact he only returned a few days ago," Margo reported.

"He photographed the pages but did nothing else?"

"Nothing else," Margo reported.

"And you have examined the book and the pages he photographed?" The Shadow continued.

"Yes."

"What did you find?"

There was a short silence from the distant locker room. Then Margo's voice again entered the blue room of The Shadow. "The book seems to be a record of the materials used in some experiments by type and quantity, and a report of various shipments made from the Hempstead laboratory and plant. I have no idea why Reigen found them interesting or important. It seems that he picked pages more or less at random to photograph."

"You have no idea what is so important about the ledger?" The Shadow asked grimly.

"No," Margo said. "Except for one peculiar thing. Many of the shipment entries seemed to follow the receipt of materials for experiments by exactly a week."

In the blue room The Shadow became silent for a time. His glowing eyes were bright with thought. His black-cloaked figure was motionless in the haze of blue. At last he bent over the communications console again.

"I must look at that book myself, Margo. Also, I

would like to get into that locked storage closet. I will come to join you now. While I am on my way, try to find out if the storage closet can be entered without difficulty."

"I'll be waiting for. . . "

Margo's voice stopped. In the blue room The Shadow adjusted the controls of the console. But there was nothing wrong with the equipment. Margo's voice came again almost at once. Her voice was suddenly low and urgent.

"Someone is in the locker room with me! I can hear them!"

"Be careful, Margo!" The Shadow hissed softly. "Sign off and take cover. Now!"

"Right," Margo whispered from the distant locker room. "I can hear them. I think . . . Too late! It's . . ."

The console went silent.

In the blue room The Shadow waited.

The silence seemed to hover thick and deadly.

There was no more sound from the console.

The Shadow touched a button on the communications unit. A new voice answered at once.

"Agent Shrevnitz."

"Proceed at once to the Federal Cybernetics plant at Hempstead," The Shadow commanded. "You can be there in five minutes. Watch for Agent Lane disguised as a blonde woman of fifty."

"On my way," the new voice answered at once.

The console was silent again. For a long minute The Shadow remained motionless in the haze of the blue room, his fiery eyes glowing with anger and a certain worry. Then his great black-shrouded figure whirled and glided away across the room. The next instant the blue room was again silent and empty. The Shadow had vanished.

The highway that runs outside the fence of the Federal Cybernetics plant and laboratory in Hempstead is a dark concrete road lined on all side by thick trees and bushes. It runs straight east and west and is heavily travelled. Just after dark a New York city taxicab drove up toward the main gate, went past, and vanished from sight among the trees along the highway. As soon as it was out of sight from the gate, the taxi pulled off the road and stopped in the shadows of the tall trees. The driver got out and moved quickly toward the fence around the Federal Cybernetics plant.

The driver was a small, dark man who wore the work clothes, leather jacket, and peaked cap of the New York

taxi driver. He reached a spot at the fence from where he could see the front and side doors of the main laboratory building. There he crouched hidden and waited, the plastic badge of his trade catching the faint rays of light in the night. He did not have long to wait. Almost as soon as he crouched, a black car drove up to the side door of the main laboratory building. The car stopped. A man got out and opened the rear door. As if on signal two more men came out of the laboratory building's side door. Between them they held the arms of a blonde older woman. The woman limped noticeably as she was walked toward the waiting car. In the bushes outside the fence the taxi driver came alert. The woman was pushed into the rear seat and one of the two men got in with her and closed the door. The other two men got into the front seat of the black car. The car moved off toward the main gate. The taxi driver watched as the car stopped at the main gate. The guards approached the car. After a brief talk, a presentation of badges and passes, the guards waved the car through the gate. The taxi driver ran for his hidden cab.

The driver reached his taxi just as the black car came into sight on the highway heading west. The driver jumped into his cab and, when the black car had passed far enough ahead, pulled out of the trees and fell in line behind the black car. The taxi driver was an expert at trailing—this was clear all the time during the long chase far out on Long Island to the east of New York. Twice the black car abruptly changed direction, taking roads that brought it east and north toward the North Shore of the island. Each time the taxi maintained its contact without being seen. Once, the taxi driver saw the black car turn onto a cross-island highway and did not follow it at all! He continued on the highway to a second turn-off. There the driver turned and drove smiling until he reached a point where this road intersected another north-south road. He stopped his cab and waited. A few minutes later, as if on signal, the black car appeared and went past. Grinning, the taxi driver again took up the chase. His detailed knowledge of the highways of Long Island had given him the certain knowledge that the black car had to pass the point where he waited. In this way, with the skills of the trained pursuer, the taxi driver followed his quarry through the night.

The black car continued to drive slowly and carefully so as not to attract any attention. It drove east and north until

it reached a secondary highway that ran along the North Shore and the calm water of Long Island Sound shining in the rising moon. The taxi driver continued to follow, but fell back now and bent slightly to speak into his dashboard.

"Agent Shrevnitz reporting to Control Central."

The crisp and neutral voice of Burbank answered from the blue light of the control room in the complex of hidden rooms high above Park Avenue. "Report, Agent Shrevnitz."

"Picked up car with Margo in disguise at Federal Cybernetics. Three men. Now driving along coast road east of Oyster Bay in the direction of Port Jefferson. There is no major turn-off for ten miles."

"Very good," Burbank said simply.

The hidden radio went silent. The taxi driver, Shrevnitz, continued his careful pursuit. The black car went on at its sedate pace, attracting no attention, clearly unaware of the cab behind it. The moon was higher now above the trees that lined the rocky coast of the North Shore, its light reaching across the placid water of the Sound like a glittering path of silver. They passed through a few small villages, and on all sides of the road there were lights in the houses where people went about their evening pleasures unaware of the silent chase going on along the road. At a point some two miles west of Port Jefferson the taxi driver suddenly cocked his head to listen and looked up into the moonlit sky. There was a noise—the sound of a helicopter engine high up. A shadow passed across the moon like a great black bird flying. Then it was gone. But the driver smiled again and nodded to himself. The chase continued through Port Jefferson. The helicopter was gone. A mile beyond Port Jefferson, on a dark and secluded section of the road where there was a deep dip and the black car ahead was, for an instant, out of sight, a tiny red light flashed once at the side of the road among a thick shadow of trees. The taxi driver slowed his cab. He passed the spot at ten miles an hour. There was a faint sound, a movement of the air inside the taxi.

"Catch them, Shrevvie," a deep voice said.

The taxi driver, Shrevvie, did not look around but stepped on his accelerator and drove fast up over the crest and out of the low spot in the road. For a time he drove with no thought but to make sure the black car did not escape. He

did not look at the figure that now sat in the back seat of the cab—the black-garbed shape of The Shadow.

"There they are, Chief," Moe Shrevnitz said.

"Good," The Shadow said. "Continue to follow carefully."

Shrevvie now looked back. "You made it fast. I heard the chopper go over."

The Shadow's eyes blazed. "I was standing by at the helicopter, Shrevvie. Margo is in danger, and I do not yet know why or who has her."

"There was three of them, Chief. Foreign-looking types. They got out of the Federal Cybernetics place with no trouble, so they all must be known there."

"It seems that way, Shrevvie," The Shadow said grimly. "The question now is are they associated with Federal Cybernetics, or are they some outside unit that has infiltrated the company? From their actions it would seem that they are not part of the company. It would be more logical for members of the company to keep Margo at the plant."

Shrevvie nodded. "Yeh, that would figure, Chief. Do you figure it's good or bad?"

The Shadow's eyes flashed. "If they are outside spies of some kind, it might be a break in the problem we face. It could be a good lead for us to the saboteurs. They are at Federal Cybernetics for some reason, Shrevvie."

"Yeh, and they looked mighty anxious to get Margo out. The way I figure. . ."

The Shadow's voice was low and quick. "They are turning off, Shrevvie!"

Shrevvie immediately returned his attention to the road. The black car had turned into a narrow side road. It vanished among thick trees that lined the narrow macadam road. Shrevvie turned the taxi after the car. The small agent of The Shadow drove skillfully and carefully along the side road among the thick trees. He reached down now and pulled a small lever under the dashboard of the taxi. Instantly the sound of his engine fell almost to nothing—a faint purr that was muffled in the night and could not be heard for more than fifty yards. Even when it was heard it sounded more like the sound of wind in trees than the sound of a car engine. The taxi crept on along the narrow road.

"There, Chief," Shrevvie said softly, and nodded ahead.

The black-top road straightened suddenly and led past a

long and high stone wall. A tall iron-work gate was set in the wall. The gate opened and the black car went through.

"Stop now!" The Shadow snapped.

Shrevvie stopped.

"Drive off the road and out of sight," The Shadow commanded.

Shrevvie drove off the road and the taxi faded into the trees and shadows. Ahead the tall gate had closed again. The Shadow, in the back seat of the taxi, concentrated his powers. He listened. He smelled the air. His keen night sight studied the wall. His burning eyes stared ahead toward the gate.

"There are no guards on the gate," The Shadow said softly. "It must be operated from the house. I can see the gables of a large mansion behind the wall. It is some kind of estate. There are dogs loose on the grounds, I can both hear and smell them. Otherwise all seems quiet. The car we have been trailing just parked at the rear of the mansion. They got out and have taken Margo into the house. They were expected, the door was opened for them."

Shrevvie listened to all that his Chief could see and hear and smell while he, Shrevvie, could hear and see and smell nothing, and marvelled again at the powers of the secret black-garbed Avenger. There was nothing that could escape The Shadow when he concentrated his powers.

"What do we do, Chief?"

"You remain here on guard, Shrevvie," The Shadow said. "You can observe the road in both directions, and you can watch the gate at the same time from this spot."

"And you?" Shrevvie asked.

The eyes of The Shadow flashed fire. "I am going over the wall, Shrevvie. I will release Margo and learn who these men are and what they are up to!"

"What about the dogs?" the small taxi driver said.

The laugh of The Shadow was low. "Dogs will not stop The Shadow, Shrevvie. Not animal dogs, nor human dogs!"

The low laugh echoed in the dark night and the next instant Shrevvie was alone in the silent taxi parked among the trees outside the wall.

The Shadow was gone.

Something seemed to move in the night at the top of the wall. A vague shifting of light no one could have seen unless they were looking for it, and even then it seemed no more than a motion of the shadows of the night.

5

In the spacious parklike grounds inside the wall nothing moved. The black car was parked silent at the rear of the big mansion that stood in the center of the walled park with a long gravel drive reaching up to it from the gate. The mansion was dark except for light in two windows at the right rear corner. On the grounds there was no one. There were only the dogs.

Four large dogs, Doberman Pinschers, that paced swiftly back and forth through the grounds as if on the trail of some prey. Each dog was alert and silent, its long jaws open and wet as it paced. They ranged wide through the dark grounds. Suddenly, all four came alert. For a second each hesitated, its ears erect, listening. They sniffed the silent air. Then, all at once as if on signal, they began to run silently toward a dark area at the base of the high wall.

The dark area moved. A tall figure came out shrouded in long black.

The dogs stopped, began to mill around the black shape of The Shadow. The dogs whined as they paced restlessly, their red eyes fixed on The Shadow.

The Shadow spoke softly and his fiery eyes burned toward the milling dogs.

Slowly the savage pinschers stopped pacing and stood looking up at The Shadow and whining softly. Then, one by one, they lay down and watched the black shape before them with docile eyes.

The Shadow whispered. "Stay!"

The four dogs laid their heads between their paws and

became silent. The Shadow moved past them and faded into the darkness.

The two lighted windows at the corner of the mansion were shaded by trees. Heavy bushes grew close to the windows along the wall of the house. One of the two windows was open in the night. The black shrouded shape of The Shadow suddenly appeared among the bushes in front of the opened window. His black figure was invisible in the night. His fiery eyes were grim as they observed the scene inside the room through the open window.

The room was more an office than a residential room. It was large, with a high ceiling and its corners were lost in shadow. There was a large desk and two smaller desks. Along the walls there were rows of filing cabinets. There was a large safe and four deep leather chairs. There was a long leather couch. On the walls there were two portraits. One was of Lenin and the other of Karl Marx. The flag of the Soviet Union stood in a stand behind the desk. On the wall behind the desk there were two more portraits of the present Soviet Party Secretary and Premier.

The eyes of The Shadow saw all this from where he stood hidden outside the window. He knew that this, then, was some official residence of members of the Soviet Government in the United States. But it was not the room that held his gaze, it was the people in it.

Margo, still disguised as the woman scientist with the limp, sat in a straight chair facing the large desk. Her hands were not tied. She was not restrained, but sat there facing the man who sat behind the desk.

The man behind the desk was a short, thick man whose heavy hands toyed nervously with a paper knife. He wore a good dark suit and the ribbon of some decoration in his lapel. His hair was close-cropped in the Russian style. He had all the earmarks of an official, and the desk was obviously his desk. The others in the room addressed him as "Excellency", and it was clear that he was the titular leader of the men in the room.

The two men who stood in the shadows against the wall spoke to the Excellency with deference and respect.

The small, dark-haired, wiry man of middle age who had the position of a Senior Scientist at Federal Cybernetics also spoke to the Excellency with respect. The scientist was seated in one of the leather chairs to the right of Margo. As The Shadow listened and watched, this small

scientists was just completing his explanation of how he had observed Margo in the laboratory and had decided to capture her to find out what she was doing and who had sent her. He had spoken in Russian.

The fifth man in the room did not treat the Excellency with respect. He was a tall, slender figure who stood in the shadows with his face hidden. His hands were long and sinuous, like small snakes moving in rays of light from the single light on the large desk. His thin body was as supple and erect as steel. His movements were like the motion of a coiled spring. When he spoke there was a cold sneer in his voice, a sharp and arrogant tone no matter who he spoke to. When he spoke no one looked at him, or answered, with respect—they answered with a tone of fear, and their eyes were uneasy as they looked at the tall man.

"So you succeeded in your work, but were apparently observed by this woman," this tall, cold man said in a voice of ice. He spoke in clear, precise Russian!

"So it seems, Colonel," the scientist said uneasily, also in Russian.

"That was careless, wasn't it Vaslov?" the thin man who had been called Colonel said softly, but his voice showed that he considered carelessness a major crime. The Shadow, who understood Russian perfectly as he did ten other languages, watched the tall, half-hidden Colonel, and he watched the scientist who Margo had called Otto Reigen, but the Colonel called Vaslov.

Reigen, or Vaslov, protested. "There was no way I could have suspected her until I saw her checking my work! Until today she seemed a plain scientist!"

"Late," Colonel Derian sneered. "But perhaps not too late."

The official at the desk was impatient. "I see no value in personality clashes, Derian! Let us get to the point."

The tall Colonel's half-hidden body turned slowly. "My dear Comrade Misygyn, I'm afraid that you see the value of very little. You are a hack, like all the men in our foreign service! The matter of personalities is of the utmost importance in my work! But, for now I agree, let us get to the point by all means. Would you care to take charge, *Excellency*?"

Outside the window The Shadow smiled as he heard the tone of contempt in the voice of Colonel Derian when he called the official, whose name seemed to be Misygyn, Ex-

cellency! For a moment the two Russians stared at each other. The scientist, Reigen or Vaslov, sat uneasily. The two guards stood silent. It was clear that they all liked Misygyn better, and would have preferred him to be in charge. It was equally clear that the real power was Col. Derian. Misygyn waved his thick hand.

"It is your work, Derian. I don't have the stomach for it."

"Too bad," Colonel Derian said. "You wish to keep your fine diplomatic hands clean, eh? Yes, that is why the Secret Cell must exist even inside the Secret Police. We must do the dirty work, eh Excellency?"

"If you call secret spying on our own spies work, yes!" Misygyn snapped. "But get on with it!"

The Colonel bowed, his face still hidden. There was a long silence as the position of the Colonel's body showed that he was now staring at the silent Margo. All this time she had sat there in her disguise listening and watching. Now her eyes turned toward the hidden face of Colonel Derian. She was aware that he was staring hard at her. When he spoke again his voice was colder than any voice The hidden Shadow had ever heard. He spoke in English—as clear and precise as his Russian.

"So, Miss Talent, or should I say Dr. Talent, you find the activities of my friend Vaslov interesting, eh?"

Margo said nothing. Only her eyes watched the tall Colonel sharply where he stood lounging against the wall in the shadows. She showed nothing at all on her face. But The Shadow, lurking silently just beyond the open window, was glad to hear that so far the Russians had not pierced Margo's disguise. They still addressed her by the name of the woman she had replaced for the Federal Cybernetics assignment: Dr. Freda Talent.

"Come, come, Doctor, you have brains. You see that we have you. Vaslov reports that you were very interested in the book he photographed. He reports that when he observed you in the Locker Room you were obviously trying to interpret your notes from that book," Colonel Derian said quietly and coldly. Then, as sudden as a whiplash, "Who sent you!"

Margo jumped visibly. For an instant the sharp and sudden attack almost worked. Caught by surprise, Margo almost answered from reflex. But the Number One agent

of The Shadow was too well trained to be caught even by such an expert technique of interrogation.

"I work for Federal Cybernetics," the disguised Margo said. "I was working late. I saw Dr. Reigen, who you call Vaslov. I wanted to know what secrets he was attempting to steal."

There was a silence inside the room of the mansion. The tall, rigid figure of Colonel Derian seemed frozen where he stood in the shadows. The diplomat, Misygyn, shook his head slowly as if in a kind of sympathy with Margo. Vaslov, or Reigen, watched her. The two almost totally unseen guards stood motionless. Outside in the bushes The Shadow had one more point to be glad about—they had not observed Margo in communication with him! His burning eyes watched the scene as the silence continued in the office of the mansion.

"You think we are fools, Dr. Talent?" the cold voice of Derian said.

"I think you are spies!" Margo snapped.

"Does that interest you?" Derian said.

"The way rats interest me," Margo said.

Vaslov swore.

"Quiet!" Colonel Derian said. "So, Doctor, bravado? Really, I am disappointed. Perhaps you are not so important after all. Unfortunate. You see, you will die whether you are a spy or some misguided eavesdropper!"

Margo, as the supposed Dr. Freda Talent, shrugged. "We all must die, Colonel Derian. Even you should know that."

The tall, thin figure of the Colonel hidden in the shadows of the room suddenly began to shake. The Shadow watched the tall man and realized that Colonel Derian was laughing—laughing hard. Everyone in the silent office watched the laughing secret police agent.

"Even I should know that we all die? Yes, Doctor, I know very well that we all die! I have helped many on their inevitable way. Oh, indeed I know about death, Doctor Talent! I am an expert of death! I live for death! Do you know what they call me, Doctor? They call me The Technician of Death! Yes, The Technician! You know you will die, do you? Yes, Doctor, but how? That is the question? How will you die, eh? I can tell you so many ways, so very many ways to die!"

Margo did not flinch. "I'm sure you can, Colonel, but you

cannot tell me one way for you to learn what you want to know!"

The half-hidden Colonel continued to shake where he stood—but now the shaking was the shake of anger. The other men in the room moved uneasily as the cold voice of the secret police officer attacked like a machine gun.

"What were you looking for?"

"I observed your man Vas. . ."

"No!" Derian thundered from the shadows. "No, you were there for a purpose! You saw Vaslov, yes, but you were *there*! You were after something! Perhaps the same thing Vaslov was after?"

"I don't know what Vaslov was after," Margo said.

"You were observing Federal Cybernetics! Why?"

"I work there."

"No! We are not fools. What did you go there to learn?"

Margo was silent.

"Why are you watching Federal Cybernetics?"

Margo said nothing.

"Who sent you?"

"No one sent me."

"The CIA perhaps?"

"Perhaps."

"No, you are not official, not a typical agent. The Army possibly? Or NASA?"

"Which one would you like?" Margo said.

"What is suspicious about Federal Cybernetics?"

Margo shrugged.

"What do you think you know? What did you hope to find? Why did that ledger interest you?"

The cold voice of the half-hidden Colonel hammered on. The words were like the lashes of a whip, the steady pounding of a hammer, the relentless drip of water in some ancient Chinese torture. Margo never blinked. Her eyes stared steadily toward where the Colonel stood.

"What have you learned, Doctor?" Derian persisted.

"That the Russians are involved with Federal Cybernetics," Margo said.

"What do you know about that closet, that secret room?"

"What secret room?"

"You will tell us!"

"Tell me what to tell."

"Who sent you?"

"I forget."

"You will remember."

"How? Will you kill me? Dead people have poor memories," Margo sneered.

The sneer in her voice seemed to act like a blow in the face to the half-hidden Colonel. The other men in the room all looked toward Derian. They seemed afraid.

"You will not die that soon, Doctor," the tall, thin Secret Police Colonel said coldly. "I must know what you know, who you are working for."

There was a movement. Outside the window The Shadow's eyes glowed as he saw the movement in the dark of the room. The tall Colonel walked slowly from the darkness into the circle of light cast by the single lamp on the desk of Misygyn. He stood tall and very thin over the seated Margo.

"You will tell me what you know, Doctor Talent. I will learn all you know."

The Shadow, at the window, saw the face of the tall Colonel. It was a long, thin face. The face of a cobra! The cold eyes were narrow and slanted like the eyes of the snake; flat and deadly with the small pupils of the snake. His nose was long and sharp like the head of a snake ready to strike. His hair was close-cropped, his mouth was wide and thin and when he spoke his teeth were sharp like pointed fangs. His neck was long and held rigid, ready to strike. His whole taut body was like the swaying body of a snake poised for attack.

"I will know, Doctor Talent."

Margo shivered but she did not quail. Her voice was low but clear and steady.

"No," Margo said.

"Yes," the Colonel said. "One way or another. It is vital that I know all that you can tell me. When a thing is vital to the Secret Cell, it is revealed to us. Below this room there is another room. It is small and there are no windows. No sound can escape that room. Down there we will be alone, you and I. The room is not known to the world, there can be no help there. Whoever sent you to Federal cannot find you there. It is very quiet down in that room, very still and silent. Nothing moves. There will be only you and I. Then you will tell me what I must know."

In the room the other men seemed to shiver as the tall, cobra-like Colonel spoke. Vaslov, the scientist, seemed to be seeing that deserted room below. Misygyn stared at the floor as if he did not want to hear, did not want to think

about that room down there below his office, did not want to know what went on beneath the surface of his smooth life out in the polite world of talk and negotiation. The two silent men on guard in the shadows acted as if they simply did not want to know what their superiors did. They were men who did what they were told to do, what they were paid to do, what they had been taught they should do, and asked no questions as to why or what. Only Margo, still in her disguise as Doctor Freda Talent, looked at Colonel Derian.

"No," she said.

Derian smiled. It was the thin, lipless, fanged smile of the cobra mesmerizing its helpless prey.

The Colonel nodded his head a fraction of an inch.

The two armed guardsmen stepped up to Margo.

Derian nodded again toward the side door of the office.

The two armed men touched Margo's shoulder.

Misygyn spoke. "Is it that vital, Derian?"

The Colonel did not even turn. "*Colonel* Derian, Excellency. And yes it is that vital. I must know exactly what she was doing, why, and for whom."

The Colonel nodded again to the guards. They took hold of Margo's shoulder to raise her. She shrugged off their hands and stood up by herself. She looked straight at Derian. The Colonel showed neither surprise nor admiration. He was not a man who cared one way or the other about his victims. He was—The Technician.

At the window The Shadow prepared to move. The instant they took Margo out was the time. That would leave only Misygyn and Vaslov. The Shadow would handle them, and then deal with Derian and the two armed guards. One by one he would handle them and so free. . . In the dark night his fire-opal girasol ring began to glow brighter. The Avenger bent over his radio-ring.

"Report, Shrevvie!"

"A car just drove up. It's parked near the gate. Two men got out under cover. They're keeping out of sight in the trees and watching the place."

"Watch them!" The Shadow ordered.

He looked into the room again and saw that something had happened in the office also. They were all suddenly alert. Misygyn was standing at his desk and listening to his intercom. Colonel Derian was watching Misygyn for the

first time with a certain sense of admission that the diplomat might have a job to do also. Vaslov looked scared.

"Who could it be!" Vaslov cried.

"Shut up!" Misygyn snapped. He listened to his intercom. "An official-looking car. No one seems to have gotten out yet. A driver and one man in the rear. The car is just sitting in the shadows." Misygyn snapped off his intercom. "Some kind of official call, Colonel, I must be ready to receive whoever it may be. Take the woman and Vaslov into the next room! Until I know just what it's about, I will see whoever it is alone."

The others left the office. Misygyn sat alone at his desk. The Shadow vanished from the window and faded into the night.

6

THE CAR WAS parked in the shadow of the trees not far from the gate of the mansion. It was long and black and had a Federal Government license plate. A silent driver sat behind the wheel. The rear seat was empty. Out of sight of the gate and the mansion, hidden among the trees, two men were deep in secret conversation. They had slipped from the car unseen by anyone but Shrevvie. Both men wore civilian clothes, but both had distinct military bearing.

They were watching the high wall and the gate of the mansion, obviously considering some plan. Suddenly the taller of the two hidden men touched his companion and they both froze in the shadows. The headlights of another car were approaching. The lights suddenly went out but the car came on slowly in the night. This new car stopped out of sight of the gate. It was a New York city taxicab. A man got out. The two men saw the man. They stood up where they were hidden among the trees. The man walked to them from the taxi. It was Lamont Cranston. He stood with the two men, hidden among the trees in the silent night.

Cranston spoke to the taller of the two men. "What brings you out here, General Rogers?"

"Keep it down, Cranston," the tall General snapped. "I want them to see the car, but not us yet. And I was about to ask you the same question."

It was obvious that the tall Brigadier General and special aide to the President was not pleased to see Cranston.

"I have business with Secretary Misygyn," Cranston said simply. He turned to the second man, the lantern-jawed

Major John Oates of the CIA. "I gather you two also have some business with our Russian friends?"

Major Oates was curt. "I don't think we can discuss the matter with you, Cranston. I suggest you leave your business until later. Unless you would care to tell us what business a supplier for Project Full Moon has with the Soviet Mission?"

"Yes, Cranston," General Rogers said. "Just what business do you have with the Russians?"

Cranston hesitated, or seemed to hesitate. Behind his calm, hooded eyes he was playing the role of the reluctant participant. Actually, he was studying Rogers and Oates. What were they doing out here? How much of all this did they know? Cranston went on with his act. He looked around, and then he reached into his coat pocket and produced a small envelope. He handed it to General Rogers.

"That will explain," Cranston said. "Commissioner Weston spoke to General Broyard, and to the President, and they agreed to let me work on the matter. I have a rather large international organization in my companies, and I can get information. It is important to me that we locate the trouble with Project Full Moon. I think an unknown civilian force might be able to obtain details the official agencies cannot."

Rogers handed the authorization paper to Major Oates. The lantern-jawed CIA man studied it with obvious distaste. But the signatures were official and irrefutable. Oates handed the papers back to Cranston.

"Amateurs! What else are they going to do to tie my hands," Major Oates said bitterly.

Cranston smiled. "Not quite an amateur, Major. I have had considerable experience with Commissioner Weston. I think you may need all the help you can get, and my companies are widespread. For example, I gather you are both here for some real purpose, and it would not surprise me if it was connected to my purpose for being here—if the two purposes are not identical. So, you see, I may not be so useless, Major."

"Just what is your purpose, Cranston," General Rogers said warily.

"A small suspicion about Federal Cybernetics," the wealthy socialite said quietly. "Since General Broyard and Commissioner Weston instructed me to work on the matter, I have had my company personnel watching the

various other suppliers of the Full Moon Project. At Federal Cybernetics they discovered a woman scientist in the General Laboratory who was not all she was supposed to be. Her name is Dr. Freda Talent. She has been acting oddly, and a check on her past reveals that she is not known at some of the references she gave to get her position! Then, just tonight, my men observed her leaving the laboratory with some strange men and another senior scientist at the lab. She seemed reluctant to go with these men. In fact, she acted as if she were being abducted. So my people followed and alerted me. Here I am."

There was a silence in the night on the road in front of the wall as Oates and Rogers looked at each other. Cranston watched them carefully from behind his impassive eyes. He had told the story of the disguised Margo to throw them off in case they too were suspicious of her, also to make himself look detached and alert if they knew about Dr. Freda Talent. He wanted to divert them from considering any possible connection between Margo and himself—or The Shadow. The work and identity of The Shadow had to be protected at all costs. Only in anonymity could the black Avenger do his work of justice. But Rogers and Oates seemed to have no suspicions. General Rogers nodded at last to the CIA Major.

"Tell him what we have learned, Major," Rogers said.

Oates was still reluctant, but he told. "We had a report from our undercover people at Federal about one of the senior scientists. I have had my eye on this man, Otto Reigen, for some time. He is a defector from the USSR many years ago. We've never been sure of him. But until recently he gave us no cause for real suspicion. Now he has. I think he is a Soviet agent—a long-term plant. We figure he was sent here to be used in some extreme emergency, and laid low and clean all this time. He began to act strange about a month ago, made contacts with a known Soviet courier. We even traced him to a man we think is a top agent. Maybe even Colonel Derian himself, we can't be sure."

Cranston's hooded eyes showed nothing. He listened as if the name of Colonel Derian meant no more to him than the name of a total stranger. From his face no one could have guessed that only minutes earlier he had been watching Colonel Derian himself. Oates saw nothing, but the eyes of the taciturn Major almost glowed when he mentioned Derian.

"We've been after Colonel Derian a long, long time. He's the best and coldest counter-agent I ever ran into. Even his own spies fear him. If we could just get Derian out of all this it would be worthwhile," Oates said.

"I think that Project Full Moon's success is a bit more vital, Major," Cranston said.

"Yes," General Rogers agreed. "Go on with what we know, Major."

Rogers nodded. "Well, when we realized that Reigen could be a Soviet agent after all, it seemed likely that he is the key to the sabotage of Full Moon. Then tonight we saw him leave with the woman. She was clearly reluctant to go, so our man followed also. He reported to us."

General Rogers took it up. "I discussed the matter with the President, and he agreed that it is all very delicate. If Reigen has been tampering, or simply spying, we need strong proof before we act. To merely stop Reigen would be useless, they would only replace him. Also, time is a factor—we must get Full Moon off the ground soon. Off the record, Cranston, our own espionage in Russia convinces us that the Soviet space people are also farther ahead than we expected! So we have a choice: we can continue undercover and attempt to expose and smash the sabotage effort; or we can come out into the open and let the Soviet know that we know of their activities and that way make them stop. Since the matter is not a military one, we think that this will work. We tell them what we know, and warn them to call it off or be exposed. I think they will not want to lose face in the eyes of the world, and will cease their activities rather than be exposed to the ridicule of spying on a civilian project we are all supposed to be neutral about. After all, both sides have said that the Moon should be a cooperative venture."

Cranston half smiled. "A cooperative venture in which both sides, us and them, are frantically trying to be first!"

General Rogers shrugged. "Be that as it may, Cranston, we have our immediate problem. Oates prefers the undercover approach, as he would. It is more important to Oates to catch spies than to prevent them spying."

Cranston smiled at Oates. "The professional mind, Major? The form not the substance, eh? Catch the spy even if it wrecks your project."

Oates bristled. "Catching spies is my job. If you don't catch them today, they spy on something else tomorrow."

Sometimes we have to sacrifice a project to save future projects."

Cranston nodded. "A good statement of the bureaucratic mind. However, I gather that the President and General Broyard disagree this time, as I do, or General Rogers would not be here."

"Right," Rogers said. "We decided to wait until Reigen contacted known Soviet officials. Tonight he has done so with the abducted woman, if she was abducted. It could be just an act. She could be in with them. You said yourself, Cranston, that she has been acting strangely."

"She has," Cranston said.

"So," Rogers said. "We are here for two purposes. Oates will observe and see what he can detect. I will make an official call and let Misygyn know that we are on to him."

Cranston frowned in the night. "One thing bothers me, General, and that is the woman. If she was taken by force, then they may be alert and reluctant to show us anything. I think that with her in their hands they are exposed. If we just walk in they will cover up, and neither Oates nor I will see anything. It is, after all, technically Soviet territory we invade. They can refuse Oates and myself entry."

"What bothers me is giving them warning!" Oates said. "We should try to catch them cold, catch them in the act! That way we might even get Colonel Derian!"

Rogers was angry, his voice almost hissed low in the night. "We are not interested in *getting* them! We are interested in *stopping* them. We must get off the next shot and land our men on the Moon. If we can stop them long enough for that one shot, it will be all settled, and we won't have to *get* them—they'll quit!"

"Perhaps," Cranston said quietly, "We can do a little of both."

The two men looked at the wealthy socialite.

"What?" Rogers said.

"What's on your mind, Cranston?" Oates said.

Cranston was thoughtful. "Just this. If we are right, and they have abducted this woman, they are vulnerable. A little careful observation in secret might show us some clues. At least, it is a chance and better than either speculating or walking in and letting them see all of us and cover up. On the other hand, since this is an essentially non-military matter, letting them know that we are aware of their sabotage,

and will inform the world of it, might just be enough to make them desist and prevent any more sabotage."

"How do we do both?" Oates snapped.

"By sending General Rogers in on an open official visit," Cranston said, "and by you and I going in under cover and seeing what we can locate while General Rogers keeps them busy! Of course, we would have to go in first. We might see quite a lot. They are undoubtedly aware by now that the official car is here, but they don't know how many of us there are. If the General makes an official visit, with his driver, they might very well let down their guard."

Rogers and Oates said nothing. The two military men in their civilian clothes stood hidden in the shadows and seemed to be considering the proposal from all angles. Cranston waited—he had not, of course, mentioned his major reason for the plan. That was to have time for The Shadow to free Margo without the two men being aware of the connection between Cranston and the black-garbed Avenger. At last Oates spoke.

"I suppose it's better than nothing, given that we want to do both things."

Rogers agreed. "Yes, it's not bad. The primary object is to try to prevent any further sabotage, and I think we have the best chance with Cranston's plan. But I must be sure they do not get wind of any trick. I think Cranston is right that you two should go in first. Oates can get to the front of the house, inside if possible, and Cranston can go to the rear. There will probably be guards, so you'll have to be careful. I'll give you ten minutes to get into position before I make my official call."

The plan was just what Cranston wanted. The socialite nodded his agreement. "Good. Then I suggest we get started."

As he prepared to go over the wall again, Cranston did not tell them that he knew that there were no guards, and that the dogs were still under the power of The Shadow. He knew that there would be no trouble getting to the house. After that, The Shadow would take charge!

"Synchronize our watches," Oates said.

The three men set their watches in unison. General Rogers nodded to Oates and Cranston.

"Ten minutes then. After that I make my official call," Rogers said.

The two men nodded. They vanished into the night in opposite directions.

In the broad park-like grounds of the Soviet mansion again nothing seemed to move. The dogs were silent. No guards walked the grounds. Nothing moved until, behind the house, part of the night itself seemed to detach and float across the open space to the window of the office that was open. The fiery eyes of The Shadow appeared again at the open window.

Inside the dim office still lighted only by the single light on the desk of Misygyn, the official himself, Vaslov and Colonel Derian were talking. There was no sign of Margo or the two armed men. Misygyn seemed very uneasy. Vaslov seemed afraid. Only Colonel Derian was in full control of himself.

"What is going on at the gate, eh?" Derian said in Russian.

Misygyn shrugged. "I don't know, Colonel. The car is there, that is all the electronic scanner shows. Perhaps our potential visitor is deciding on his course of action. It is an unusual hour for an official call. Perhaps our caller is re-evaluating his position."

"Who could it be?" Vaslov asked nervously.

"Probably someone looking for information," Derian said. "Whoever it may be, Misygyn, get rid of him fast. We have much work to do on Dr. Talent. I am anxious to get to it. Until the visitor goes I will keep her under guard in the room downstairs. After that I wish to be alone with her, is that clear?"

Misygyn showed distaste on his face. "Do not tell me the details of your work, Derian. I would rather not know. I will help you as much as necessary, but I will not participate. Is that clear?"

Colonel Derian smiled his cobra smile. "Quite clear, my dear Excellency. You have no compunctions about using my results, but you are squeamish about how they are obtained! Ah, what has happened to the men of the Revolution? Where are the men who broke the eggs to make Lenin's omlette? We grow soft, Misygyn, much too soft. Down in my room, alone, there is no softness!"

Outside the window the glowing eyes of The Shadow watched the snake-like Colonel. Inside him the hatred swelled for this man with the eyes and the soul of a cobra. But Derian had told The Shadow the one thing he had to know—Margo was down in the secret room directly beneath the office! While Rogers was in the office, Margo would be guarded only by the two armed men. Colonel Derian and Vaslov would not be

in the secret room, they would probably be in the next room to the office listening. It was all that The Shadow needed—to have them all separate and unaware of the danger from The Shadow.

The intercom on Misygyn's desk suddenly buzzed in the silence of the office. Vaslov jumped a foot. Colonel Derian sneered at the scientist. Misygyn flicked the button on his intercom.

"Yes?" Misygyn said, and listened.

The two other men waited.

"General Rogers?" Misygyn said, and the diplomat looked hard at the other two. "Send him in."

Misygyn clicked off his intercom and sat back. "Brigadier General Calvin Rogers. I know him well. A special assistant to the United States President. What do you make of it Derian?"

"They are worried about Project Full Moon, of course," the Colonel said. "I imagine he is going to pump you. They must have learned of our accelerated schedule. Leave your intercom key open, Misygyn. We will listen in the next room. Come, Vaslov."

The tall Colonel led the small scientist from the office just as the outer door opened. Calvin Rogers entered the room. The General looked around, but there was no evidence now of anyone else having been with Misygyn. The diplomat stood and smiled at Rogers as he extended his hand. The two men shook hands, and Misygyn waved Rogers to a seat. Rogers sat down.

"What can I do for you, General?" Misygyn asked smoothly. "You call at an odd hour."

"It is a matter that has no normal hours, Excellency," Rogers said grimly.

"Ah?" Misygyn said. "That important? Surely you could have conducted it through the normal channels? My Government does not approve of, how do you say, personal diplomacy? We leave such old-fashioned methods to our British and French friends."

"I don't think your Government would appreciate this matter going through the normal channels. Those channels have many leaks. I think your Government would want this kept quiet, Misygyn."

"So?" the Russian diplomat said. "What would we want kept so quiet, my dear General? Surely you know that my Government has no secrets from the world?"

"I won't bother to laugh at that one, Excellency," Rogers said drily, "but I will repeat that we think that you would not want it broadcast around the world that, after all your pious pleas for peaceful cooperation in space, you are sabotaging our peaceful efforts to reach the Moon."

Misygyn jumped to his feet. "You dare to accuse the Government of The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of sabotage!? A direct accusation that we are sabotaging Full Moon? You will please leave my office at. . ."

Rogers smiled. "How did you know that I referred to Project Full Moon? How did you even *know* about Full Moon? It is a top secret project, as you must know, and not our regular Moon Project. How did you know about Full Moon, Excellency?"

Misygyn slowly sat down, smiled. "Ah, yes, a slip of the tongue, eh? All right, General, we are aware of Project Full Moon. We have our sources of information, as you know. But we are not sabotaging! In fact, since you bring it up, our major interest is what you. . ."

The two quick shots echoed like blows in the dark night!

Misygyn froze.

General Rogers jumped up and half-turned toward the door.

The Shadow, at the window, had listened to the conversation, and had been just about to begin his task of freeing Margo. He was already studying the darkened windows on the other side of the mansion.

When the two shots ripped the silent night The Shadow's burning eyes watched the reaction in the office of the Russians. Margo must be freed—if the shots had not been her death blow!

7

THE SHADOW peered in the window with a sinking feeling. Had the shots been for Margo? Had he waited too long? Had the desire to solve the sabotage cost Margo her life? The questions whirled in the mind of the black-garbed Avenger. Then his mind clamped down its control, focused its powers, and analyzed the facts.

The shots had come from in front of the house. Margo would certainly not be killed before she talked unless Colonel Derian had made a mistake, and Derian was not the kind of man who made mistakes. And even as The Shadow watched the scene inside the office of Misygyn, he saw that it could not be Margo who had been shot.

The two armed guards who had been with Margo ran into the office with their pistols drawn. They had panic on their faces, their eyes were wild with apprehension until they saw Misygyn. They also saw General Rogers and covered him with their guns. Misygyn waved them off.

"No, you fools, outside!" the diplomat said. "The shots came from outside! Find out what has happened! Are the others still here?"

"Yes, Excellency," one of the armed guards said.

"He has gone to find the source of the shots," the second guard said, obviously referring to Colonel Derian, but not wanting to mention the name or presence of the Colonel in front of Rogers.

"Help him!" Misygyn snapped.

The diplomat was obviously agitated, disturbed. The Shadow watched the heavy-set man pace the office. And he watched General Rogers who sat now quiet and composed in a chair

as if he had no interest in the shots at all. In the midst of the chaos and pandemonium, Rogers remained calm and apparently unconcerned. The Shadow's eyes glowed. Either Rogers had iron control, or he actually did not care about the shots.

The two armed men turned and ran from the room. At the window The Shadow moved. With the guards out searching for who had fired the shots, and with Derian and Vaslov alarmed and busy, it was The Shadow's opportunity to free Margo. The black-shrouded figure glided away through the night toward the darkened windows on the far side of the mansion.

The Shadow moved soundlessly, a wraith of shadow in the dark, unseen and unheard by the guards searching the grounds to see who had fired the shots. But there was another wraith in the night. Only the super-power of the black Avenger's hearing and vision in the dark revealed this second silent figure that moved through the grounds like a tiger stalking some jungle for its prey. The Shadow heard the delicate footsteps and became an immobile shadow, a part of the night itself.

Colonel Derian passed within five feet of the black-garbed Avenger. The cobra-like face of the secret police officer was rigid with intensity as he looked and listened, an ugly pistol with a silencer in his hand. Derian moved without a sound, without a crackle of twigs or a movement of the air as he passed. The tall, cadaverous Colonel was an expert at stalking, and only The Shadow could have seen or heard him as he passed in the night and moved off toward the distant wall of the grounds. A feeling of cold remained long after the Colonel had passed.

When all was still again, the sound of the search by the guards moved far away to the other end of the spacious park-like grounds, The Shadow moved again toward the dark side of the mansion. His black-garbed figure was no more than the passing of dark air. He knew now that Colonel Derian and the two armed men were out in the night—but he had not seen Vaslov. His fiery eyes watched for the small, wiry scientist as he reached the dark windows of the mansion. He neither saw nor heard the spy-scientist. Was Vaslov the victim of the shots? Or was Vaslov lurking somewhere to watch? Alert, The Shadow silently opened a window on the dark side of the house and vanished inside.

In the small, windowless, and soundproof room far below the office of Misygyn, Vaslov paced the soundless cork floor and listened for any further sounds from outside. He heard nothing in the soundproofed room. He had heard the shots, but not in this room. He had been upstairs with Derian when the shots split the night. The Colonel had sent him down to get the guards, to send the two guards up, and to take their place.

"This could be some attempt to rescue the woman," Colonel Derian had said. "Be alert down there. Let no one into the room except myself. You know the signal."

That had been ten minutes ago—ten minutes that seemed like hours to the nervous Vaslov. The scientist was not suited for this work—which was why he had been a "sleeper" agent, a man who could pass all scrutiny in his assumed identity and work until it was time for him to become the active spy. He was a scientist who was also a spy, not a spy who was partly a scientist, and he was not happy with the demands of espionage. But it was his job, and he paced the silent room and watched the woman prisoner.

Margo, as Dr. Freda Talent, was seated on a heavy straight chair. It was a strange, macabre-looking chair: thick and heavy, with straps that held her wrists down on the heavy arms, and straps for her feet and neck. It looked like the electric chairs used in execution chambers. This chair, too, had wires attached and electronic controls. Margo, as the middle aged woman scientist, sat calmly in the chair, but small beads of sweat on her face showed that her calmness came only by an effort. Alone in the windowless and soundless room, she felt for the first time abandoned.

Vaslov paced and looked at his watch. The nervous scientist-spy held a pistol.

Margo sat in silence.

No sound came from anywhere.

The light in the room was feeble.

There was only one lamp to dispel the windowless gloom. A green-shaded bulb that hung from the ceiling and swayed hypnotically back and forth in a slow arc.

Neither Margo nor Vaslov saw or heard the outer door of the room open and close. There was a faint rush of air. Vaslov turned but saw nothing. The scientist blinked, stared, but the door was closed and he saw nothing and no one. Margo, too, had felt the sudden touch of moving air. She, too, saw nothing. But she knew who had entered the room. Her

eyes were bright as she waited. Vaslov looked at her. He saw her face. He was about to speak when the eerie laugh shattered the silence of the hidden room.

Vaslov whirled, his gun ready. "Who is it?"

The Russian scientist-spy blinked. He saw nothing. There were only the gloomy shadows in the empty and silent room.

"Who laughed? I heard a laugh!" Vaslov cried, his frantic eyes searching.

Vaslov whirled to Margo. "You heard? There was a laugh! I know someone laughed!"

Margo said nothing. Vaslov turned again, searched the gloom of the room with his frantic eyes. He turned back to Margo. He took her by the shoulders. He shook her.

"I heard it! You hear? I'm not going crazy! I heard a laugh. Someone is in this room! I'm not going crazy!"

Margo looked up coldly. "Where? Where is someone?"

Vaslov stared at her cold face. He looked all around and saw nothing. He looked back at Margo. Suddenly he reached out and slapped her face.

"Liar! You know! You. . ."

The laugh of The Shadow came again, eerie and cold. The deep voice of the Avenger filled the room.

"Do you hear me, Vaslov? Or is it all a dream? Are you hearing a real voice, or are you going insane? Be sure, Vaslov!"

The small, wiry Russian crouched now, pointed his gun toward the gloomy shadows of the room. "I hear you! I hear a real voice! Don't move or I will kill you!"

The laugh was mocking. "Can you kill what you cannot see? If I am real, why do you not see me, Vaslov?"

The Russian screamed. "I will see you! There, you are there!"

Vaslov fired into a dark corner. The bullet whined and bounced in the small room, luckily missing everyone. The laugh of The Shadow mocked the small scientist.

"I see you! I see you!" Vaslov shrieked in terror.

The scientist-spy pointed his gun at the corners of the room. He blinked and peered ahead, his gun pointing but not firing because he could still see nothing. He rubbed his eyes, shook his head that seemed to be growing thick. He rubbed his eyes with his left hand against a haze that seemed to be filling the room, a mist that rolled slowly into his brain, a cloud that fogged his vision. He could not seem to think.

"I . . . I . . . will . . . see you!"

Vaslov rubbed frantically at his eyes. Then his movements slowed. He shook his head, but it was a slow and weary shaking as if he knew now that he could not dissipate the cloud on his brain. He smiled as if now he did not want to escape the warm cloud that enfolded his mind. Then, suddenly, as his will ceased to be his own, he saw the two fiery eyes that seemed to glow and burn through from the gloom of the hidden and silent room. He saw the eyes, and the hawk-nose beneath the wide brim of a black slouch hat. He saw the red fire-opal girasol on the long finger of steel, and the great black cape that flowed and blended into the dim gloom the room. Vaslov smiled.

"I can see you!"

"Yes, Vaslov, you can now see me. But you cannot harm me. You are under my power, Vaslov, the power of The Shadow!"

Vaslov nodded. "Yes."

"You will hand me your pistol, and you will sit on the floor," The Shadow commanded.

Vaslov handed his pistol to the long hand of The Shadow, and sat obediently on the floor. The Shadow glided across the small room to Margo. He freed her and she stood up.

"For a moment I thought . . ." Margo began.

"I would have been here sooner, Margo, but there was much to hear upstairs," The Shadow said.

The Avenger turned his great black shape to the seated and silent Vaslov. "Tell me what you were doing at Federal Cybernetics!"

"It was my job. They asked me to report anything unusual. I found the ledger. There was too much. I reported it."

"Why do they want to know about anything unusual at Federal Cybernetics?" The Shadow demanded.

"Sabotage," Vaslov said. "The project has failed many times. Derian came about the sabotage."

"Yes, the sabotage," The Shadow said softly. "How is it being done? How do they. . ."

The cloaked Avenger stopped. His keen ears had heard the sounds far beyond the soundproofed room. Sounds that no one else could hear. Someone was walking toward the entrance down from upstairs to the cellar where the hidden room was located. The Shadow would not be trapped in the small room.

"Quick, Margo, to the door," The Avenger snapped, and

he turned his eyes toward the seated Vaslov. "You will not remember this. You will not remember me. You will say that Margo escaped by overpowering you!"

Vaslov nodded. "She overpowered me, yes. She took my pistol."

The Shadow's eyes glowed and without another word he turned and glided to the door. He opened the door with his powers and led Margo out into the dark cellar. The Shadow and Margo faded into the far reaches of the vast cellar. The door from above opened. Colonel Derian came down quickly and strode across the cellar to the door of the hidden room. The Colonel swore! The door was not locked! !

Colonel Derian tore the door open and strode into the hidden room. He did not close the door behind him. Where they stood in the darkness of the cellar Margo and The Shadow could see the tall Colonel standing over Vaslov like the swaying shape of a coiled cobra. They heard the voice of Vaslov.

"She escaped. Took my gun. She attacked me by surprise."

Derian's voice was as cold and hard as a glacier. "She could not! How could she escape the chair?"

There was a pause. Then Vaslov said, puzzled. "I don't know. She . . she . . . must have had . . . help. I . . she overpowered me. She took my gun. She . . ."

"Who helped her?"

"I don't know. I . . . I . . ."

"She could not have escaped!" Erian said. "Not without help, and you are the only person here."

"I . . ." Vaslov began. Then his voice rose high. "No! No!"

The silenced shot echoed through the cellar. Vaslov was silent. In the room Colonel Derian stood with his pistol smoking in his hand.

The Shadow touched Margo and the two agents of justice crossed the cellar and went silently up the stairs.

Five minutes later The Shadow was again at the open window of Misygyn's office. Margo had gone to the road where Shrevvie waited in the taxi. The Shadow's fiery eyes watched the office through the window. General Calvin Rogers sat alone in the exact spot where The Shadow had last seen him. Rogers was smoking a cigarette and calmly reading a Russian periodical.

A moment later Misygyn came back into the office. The stocky diplomat stalked to his desk and sat down facing Rogers. The General looked up at the Russian. Misygyn stared at Rogers and his face was suffused with anger.

"We found a body, General!"

Rogers seemed to tense. "A body? What about who did the shooting?"

"No, we did not find the killer. But we found the body."

Rogers leaned forward. "Is that supposed to be some kind of threat, Excellency?"

"Yes, a threat!" Misygyn thundered. "Do you know what body we found? Out there inside our walls? On our grounds? Do you know?"

Rogers said nothing. Outside the window The Shadow was beginning to understand what the shots had been.

"Oates!" Misygyn stormed. "We found the body of Major John Oates of your Central Intelligence Agency! On our territory! Did you think we wouldn't know?"

"Oates?" General Rogers said slowly.

"You thought I did not know Major Oates? Yes, I know the Major. Now he is dead—shot on Soviet territory! Spying! What was he spying for, General? What was he up to?"

"How should I know?" Rogers said calmly.

"Liar!" Misygyn thundered, putting on a fine act of outraged anger. "Major Oates was not out there, secretly, for the game of it! He was spying! Why? What did he want?"

"I have no idea. So you killed, eh? That. . ."

"That was our right! He was trespassing! I will lodge a formal protest!"

"How will you explain the murder of Major Oates?" Rogers demanded. "That will cause trouble, Misygyn."

"Trouble? We have his body! On our grounds! A spy! There are rules about that, Colonel, and you know it! I will lodge a very strong protest. And I will include you!"

"Me?" Rogers said.

"You think we are fools? Obviously your ridiculous visit was to create a diversion, to cover for Oates, to keep us busy while Oates sneaked onto our grounds and prepared to spy! Well, you have been caught! Oates has been killed, as he should have been, and we know your duplicity! I do not think America will want it known that they send CIA men to spy on foreign diplomats in their own houses!"

"Nor will your Government want it known what Oates was looking for—the evidence of your sabotage of Project

Full Moon! If you protest, we will protest and bring your sabotage out into the glare of day, Misygyn!"

Misygyn blinked. "Our . . . sabotage? So, that is your idea, eh?"

"It is! And you have been warned," Rogers snapped.

Misygyn did not answer for a moment. Then the heavy-set diplomat stood up. He motioned curtly toward the door out of his office.

"You will leave now, General. I order you from Soviet territory! You will be hearing from me concerning Major Oates when I have my instructions. Meanwhile, his body remains here! Is that clear?"

Rogers stood up angrily. "Very clear! Rest assured I will make my report, and you will be hearing from us!"

Without another word, General Rogers turned on his heel and stalked from the office. The door closed behind him.

Misygyn stood there for a moment. Then the side door opened and Colonel Derian came in.

"I know why Oates was here now," the tall Colonel said. "The woman has escaped."

"Escaped?" Misygyn said. "From you?"

"From Vaslov. I shot him," Derian said. "He was either a traitor or a fool. I cannot risk either. The woman is gone, we have searched the grounds. She must have had help. Oates was probably not alone!"

"And Rogers diverted us!" Misygyn said. He looked at Derian. "What now, Colonel?"

"Now I will take charge myself. The information Vaslov got is most interesting. I think I will take a trip."

"A trip? Where?" Misygyn asked.

Colonel Derian turned away. "That you do not need to know. You will act as my contact with Moscow. For the rest, I will handle it alone."

Colonel Derian left Misygyn alone and staring at the door. Out in the night The Shadow glided quickly away from the window and disappeared into the darkness.

Some minutes later Lamont Cranston suddenly appeared in the road outside the walls of the Soviet mansion. He walked quickly to the official car of Rogers. He lighted a cigarette and waited, his hooded eyes impassive. Down the road in the shadows the taxi waited with Margo and Shrevvie hidden inside. Cranston had been there only seconds when the iron gate

opened and General Calvin Rogers stepped out. The General was now obviously shaken and furious.

"Cranston! They killed Oates!"

Cranston pretended shock. "Oates? I heard the shots, but I had no idea! They killed him?"

"I don't know who killed him! But he is dead," Rogers said angrily. "Where were you?"

"At the rear of the house. I saw nothing. I tried to get inside, but the only open window was in the office you were in. I left after the shots and tried to see what had happened, but I saw nothing. Except their guards. They almost caught me, so I came out."

Rogers nodded. "The damned bad part is that there's little we can do! Oates knew the risks. He must have become careless, the fool! The Russkis are within their rights, damn them. Oates was trespassing."

"How did Misygyn take your warning?" Cranston asked.

Rogers laughed bitterly. "Oh, he denied it all, but he knows something. He knew all about Full Moon, and he knows more about the sabotage than he'll admit. No, I have no doubts now that they are behind it all."

"Will they stop now that they know we know?"

Rogers was thoughtful. "I'm not sure. I think so though. They won't want it made public. And we'll have to keep it quiet, even about Oates. I'll report to the President, of course, but I don't think even General Broyard should know. In a way we made a bargain—they stop and we keep quiet. The important thing is Project Full Moon. It must remain secret, and its whole fate depends on everything being kept quiet now."

"Then you think the next shot will succeed?" Cranston said quietly.

"I hope so, Cranston. I think they've been warned. Now I must go and report. You can make your way back all right?"

"Of course. You go ahead," Cranston said.

Rogers nodded and climbed into his car. Cranston stood in the shadows at the edge of the road and watched the big official car disappear. Then he turned and walked quickly to the taxi where Margo and Shrevvie waited. The small taxi driver and agent of The Shadow was excited.

"Boss, who was shot?" Shrevvie asked.

"Major Oates, Shrevvie," Cranston said. "Why?"

"I was on watch right after the shooting," Shrevvie explained, "and I saw two guys come over the wall! They came

real fast. They ran off into the woods over there, and I heard a car start up way back, probably on another road. I never heard it drive up, so they were probably inside all the time!"

"Russians?" Cranston snapped.

Shrevvie scratched his jaw. "Maybe, but they didn't look like it to me. I mean, why would Russkis come running over the wall so fast to get away?"

Margo nodded. "Shrevvie has a point, Lamont."

"Yes, he does," Cranston said slowly.

"Besides," Shrevvie said. "I think I recognized at least one of them. I mean, I recognized his description—he fits one of the men Harry Vincent saw in that staff car near the NASA Utah Base after the moon shot failed!"

Cranston was silent. His eyes flashed once with the fire of The Shadow. Then he climbed into the taxi beside Margo. He spoke sharply.

"There is something wrong in all this, Shrevvie. I think it is time for The Shadow to investigate that office and secret closet in the laboratory of Federal Cybernetics!"

Shrevvie nodded. The taxi drove off quickly in the night and turned back toward the west and the distant plant of Federal Cybernetics.

8

THE LABORATORY of Federal Cybernetics was dark and empty. The shades had been drawn by the night watchman on his last round, the door locked, all the windows checked and locked. Nothing moved, there was no sound except the bubbling of liquid in some all night experiments, the steady drip-drip-drip of liquid from a distillation column into a flask.

In the far corner away from the office of Dr. Max Ernest a complicated electronic experiment operated with flashing lights and the automatic click of timed switches. A read-out instrument steadily fed paper beneath a moving stylus that traced an undulant line on the graduations of the graph paper. The night watchman on his rounds checked the experiments each time, and looked at a paper he carried for instructions. With the paper in front of him the watchman could make minor adjustments and give the scientists a little sleep.

After the last visit of the watchman the laboratory was deserted for the night. The experiments continued on their automatic course. In the whole building there was now no sound. The cleaning women and floor polishers had finished their work and gone. A few late-working executives had called it a long day and driven off to well-earned nightcaps. There was no light and no sign of human life in the entire plant. Only the small island of light at the main gate where the two night guards sat in their glassed-in guard house and took turns watching and sleeping.

The awake guard watched the locked gate, but his main attention was given to an electronic annunciator panel that was the actual security of the plant. The panel showed small

white squares that were condition-alarm flags for every danger point in the plant: the electrified fence; each gate; the exit and entrance to the parking lot; each and every door and window into all the buildings; every door inside the buildings; all vital production areas. When all was secure every small alarm flag on the annunciator was white. When anyone or anything touched any spot after the alarms were set, the flags on the annunciator showed red and there was a sharp, audible alarm.

This night the awake guard yawned as the hours passed and nothing at all happened. Once he stood up, just about midnight, and walked out to the gate. He breathed deeply in the silent night and turned to survey the plant. For a split second he froze. For that second he thought he had seen something, a shape, float up and over the fence far to his left. Just some *thing*: shapeless, a vague movement of the dark. He rubbed his eyes and peered into the night. Nothing moved now. He walked quickly into the glass cubicle of the guard house and looked at the annunciator. It showed all white. There had been no audible alarm. The guard smiled ruefully. His imagination was obviously playing tricks on him. It was impossible for anyone to climb the fence, or even fly over the fence without tripping the alarm. He went back to his seat without ever seeing the two fiery eyes that watched from the darkness at the base of the fence.

The Shadow, who had neutralized the electronic circuit with his powers and prevented it from breaking and so tripping the alarm annunciator, slipped away from the base of the fence and crossed the plant grounds toward the Main Laboratory Building. At the rear of the Laboratory Building he again concentrated to keep the alarm circuit closed, easily jimmied the window with the special tools he always carried under his cloak, and entered the building. He had chosen a corridor window, and now he crouched in the dark like part of the shadows themselves and listened. His keen hearing heard no sounds in the whole building except the faint noises of the all-night experiments still running up in the Main Laboratory on the second floor. The Avenger glided down the corridors, up the stairs, and toward the locked door of the main laboratory, making no sound at all, unseen, like the passing of a breath of wind along the corridors.

At the locked door into the laboratory the cloaked Avenger again concentrated his powers on the alarm circuit. Then he opened the door with his special tools and went inside. The

door closed behind him. In the corridor all was quiet again, nothing stirred, the corridor was as deserted and silent as if no one had passed for hours. But The Shadow had passed, and inside the laboratory the Avenger made his swift and silent way across the lab, past the experiments still bubbling and flashing lights, into the glassed-in office of Dr. Max Ernest. There the great black shape paused and his eyes glinted in the dimness as he surveyed the office of the Chief of Research for Federal Cybernetics.

The fiery eyes of the Avenger studied the entire office of the Research Chief. He saw nothing unusual. He began to open the rows of filing cabinets that were filled with the reports of the work performed by the Main Laboratory. A trained chemist and physicist, The Shadow studied the reports one by one quickly, but could find nothing wrong or in any way unusual. The chemical experiments were primarily concerned with rocket fuels and ultra-cold cryogenic fluids. The physical work was mainly on control and valving systems in very small fluid flows—and there was nothing out of the usual in these reports. The Avenger was not surprised. He had had to check to be certain, but he was sure that if anything strange was going on in the laboratory the records would be kept in secret.

The Shadow turned his attention to the small safe.

His long, deft, steel-like fingers manipulated the dial as his great black-shrouded figure crouched low in front of the safe. His sharp ears listened to the fall of the tumblers. Moments later the safe was open. The Shadow removed the contents, quickly confirmed that there was nothing in the safe that Margo had not described, and returned all but the ledger-book. This he carried to the desk laid open. He sat down and lighted the miniature flashlight he had designed in his own secret laboratory. The tiny lamp cast an intense light on a minute area that could be seen for only a few feet away. The black Avenger slowly turned the pages of the ledger-like book. His eyes glowed as he read the entries, reading slowly and carefully on each page until he had read the entire ledger. In the seat in the darkened office the black-shrouded figure sat back.

The Shadow now knew what had interested Vaslov, alias Reigen, in the ledger. His fiery eyes glowed in the dark as he considered the meaning of the entries.

From the reports he had read, and from his knowledge of chemistry and physics, The Shadow saw what Vaslov

had seen—that many of the entries for materials received were much too large! They were, in fact, according to a rapid mental calculation made by the Avenger, exactly double the necessary quantities for the recorded experiments! In addition, in the shipments Margo had noted that went out exactly a week after experimental material had come in, the shipment seemed to be about half the incoming material!

The eyes of The Shadow were intense: the meaning was clear. Some work was being done at Federal Cybernetics that was not being recorded in the official records of the company, was not being reported to NASA or any other Governmental agency. It was also clear that less material was being shipped than should have been. Not only was work being done that was not being reported, but it looked very much like shipments were being made to some unknown and unrecorded destination.

The Shadow thought about that single mislabeled shipment of material to the NASA Utah Base. A shipment that had been late because it had gone by mistake to some town in Idaho instead of Utah. The Shadow was well aware of one important fact—Federal Cybernetics had a small plant in Idaho! On the surface, then, it seemed like a simple clerical error: a shipment intended for the Utah Base had simply been mislabeled by some clerk for the Federal Cybernetics plant in Idaho. But was it a simple error? Material was being shipped somewhere in secret—why not the Idaho plant?

The Shadow closed the ledger and returned it to the safe. The safe locked again, the Avenger turned to the door marked *Storage*. He was now more than interested in what was behind the innocent-seeming door. His burning eyes studied the double lock. He recognized its construction. With his special lock-tools, the black-garbed Avenger went to work on the door. He had it open in seconds and stepped into the closet behind the door.

It was exactly what it was supposed to be—a storage closet. Papers and chemical materials were on all the shelves that lined all three walls. But The Shadow studied the walls and shelves with extreme care—J. Wesley Bryan had come into this closet and he had not come out for a long time. The Shadow did not think that the president of Federal Cybernetics had spent his time in a closet! No, there had to be some secret exit from this closet, and his glowing eyes studied

every inch of the innocent-seeming walls. He found the tiny crevice just at the joint of the third shelf from the floor in the rear wall. A crevice so small no eyes but the eyes of The Shadow could have detected it. Once he had found the door it was the work of only moments to ascertain just where the controls were. The door was operated by a small hook at the edge of the shelf. The Avenger concentrated his powers to prevent any alarm circuit from breaking, and touched the hook.

Nothing happened.

The Shadow studied the controls more carefully. They were electronically highly sophisticated. They only operated when touched by a special electronic device that emitted a sound of exact pitch! Grimly, The Shadow focused his powers and his mind projected sounds of slowly rising pitch until he heard the faint click and the secret door in the closet wall began to open. The Avenger felt a great deal of respect for the brain that had conceived and developed the controls of the secret door. He did not think that anyone else in the world could have opened the secret door without knowing the precise method. But he had no time for admiration. He ducked low and went through the now open secret door.

He stood up, his, his great black shape like heavy shadow in the dark, and his fiery eyes looked slowly around the room he now stood in. It was a long, narrow room. Not small, but very long and narrow, and the Avenger saw that it had been built so as to remain unsuspected between the walls of the building and the interior walls of the corridor. On one side of the room there was nothing at all. But the other side, the interior side, was a long low laboratory bench with all the facilities of a laboratory. It was both a chemical and electronic laboratory. Even a quick look told The Shadow that it was a highly advanced and complete small laboratory. And there was something strange about it. The Shadow's eyes studied the entire room. There was something very strange—very odd—unusual. For another instant the Avenger could not place the strangeness. Then he saw—the long bench, the sinks, the hood, the cabinets, the entire facilities of the secret laboratory were built low, too low! Everything looked as if it had been built for a midget!

Or for a man in a wheel chair! !

The small and hidden room was the private laboratory of J. Wesley Bryan.

But why was it so hidden? Why was it secret?

Or was it a secret? Perhaps Bryan simply liked privacy for his private work. The Shadow was aware of the fact that Bryan was a scientist and a good one. The accident that had put Bryan into his wheel-chair was the result of a daring experiment with rocket fuels many, many years ago before anyone had really made successful rockets. The laboratory's secret nature could be simply an eccentric scientist's desire for privacy while he worked; the double locks and tricky electronic devices simply a scientist's precautions against anyone accidentally and prematurely learning of his work. Or there could be a more sinister cause. The Shadow began to search the small laboratory, to study the work that J. Wesley Bryan was keeping so hidden.

He learned quickly that the work was intricate and highly advanced; that it was both chemical and electronic and delicately mechanical. He studied the secret records being kept by Bryan, and the details of the crippled company-president's experiments. After almost an hour, the Avenger sat down on a small desk and his burning eyes glowed with the concentration of his thoughts. What he had found was that J. Wesley Bryan seemed to be working on nothing unusual at all! ! And that was the surprising thing. The explanation for the extra experimental material was clear—Bryan was working along parallel lines to his scientists out in the main laboratory. He was doing almost exactly the same work on rocket fuels and the electronic-mechanical fuel control that his company had developed and that had made the sudden leap in progress toward a manned landing on the Moon that had caused Project Full Moon to be created.

The Shadow considered the puzzling information. It was the new fuel control that had made NASA create Full Moon in secret to make their sudden leap to the Moon almost two years ahead of any schedule. Bryan, in his secret laboratory, was working on the exact fuel control system—and on the rocket fuel itself. The only difference that The Shadow could detect was that Bryan's experiments seemed to be developing further improvements in both his control system and the fuel itself. In fact, the fuel control as Bryan was developing it now seemed to be a super version based on test results and operating experiences reported to Federal Cybernetics by NASA—and by some other sources. The records did not make clear where the other test data had come from, but it was clear that Bryan had been using the results of

many tests on both fuel and control system, and not all had come from NASA.

The glowing eyes of The Shadow were strangely blank now as he let his thoughts turn inward. It was only normal that a scientist like Bryan should continually work and develop new improvements in his control system and his rocket fuels. Then why the secrecy? Why were only half shipments made to NASA Utah Base? Why was Bryan's work in this hidden laboratory so much farther advanced than the work done out in the main laboratory for all to see? Was Bryan hiding, or was it simply the normal and well-known reluctance of a scientist to reveal his work before he was sure and ready? And where were the other shipments going, if anywhere? It looked very much like Federal Cybernetics was working with someone else as well as NASA!

The Soviet? Was that the answer?

But how? How could Bryan ship to the Soviet Union? How could he work with them and get the data from them? And why? What would Bryan or Federal have to gain by working with the Soviet? The object was to get to the Moon, it did not require more than one project. And where did the sabotage fit in, if at all? Bryan would have no reason to sabotage his own project, his own scientific triumph. By all reason, Bryan should be one of the most eager to get Full Moon on its way and prove the genius of his fuel control system. No, nothing here tended to the idea that Federal had any hand in the sabotage after all. But if Bryan was advancing his ideas, and the Soviet had heard about it, then there was a strong explanation of the presence of Vaslov and Colonel Derian, and of their attempt to learn what was happening at Federal! The more The Shadow considered, the more the Soviet looked like the saboteurs, and yet. . .

The mind of The Shadow suddenly clicked off its train of thought and came instantly alert. He had heard the distant sound. A sound of voices as if from far off. But the Avenger knew that they were not from far away, they were only distant-sounding because they were in the office of the Research Director beyond the secret electronic door and through the closet door. His keen ears had heard the click of the light switch. He was not concerned with discovery yet, as he had closed and locked all doors behind him, but he glided across the laboratory to the wall nearest the office of Dr. Ernest and placed his ear against the wall to listen.

There were two voices. They were speaking quietly. One voice was more agitated than the other. Muffled as they were, the voices were not easily identifiable, and The Shadow could recognize neither of them until he heard a name—Dr. Ernest! It was the Research Director who had the agitated voice as if he was not pleased with his visitor.

"Then we are almost ready, eh Ernest?" the calmer voice said. "With the project, yes, but I don't like this about Oates," Dr. Max Ernest said nervously. "They're all getting too close."

"There are always risks, Dr. Ernest," the calm voice said coldly. "Oates will not bother us any more."

The Shadow strained to identify the voice. There was a certain familiarity to the voice, he was certain he had heard it somewhere, but even his perfect memory could not place the voice now. The hidden laboratory was heavily soundproofed, there were two walls between the men outside and The Shadow, and the two men were speaking low. The super hearing of The Shadow could hear the words, but the tone and timbre of the voices were muffled and he could not recognize them.

"What about the others?" Dr. Ernest said out in the office beyond the two walls.

"The others will not stop us, Doctor!" the calm voice said harshly. "No one will stop us now. We have bought time, my dear Max! Time is with us now. The last few details to be ironed out in the field and then it is time! We have done all there is to do here."

There was a silence out in the office of the Research Chief. The Shadow, hidden in the inner laboratory, listened and tried to recognize the voice of the calm man. But it was no use. The Shadow would have to leave the hidden laboratory if he was to identify the speaker. That meant a risk of being seen prematurely himself, but it was a risk he would have to take. The Avenger glided to the door out of the hidden laboratory into the closet. As he did so, he heard Dr. Max Ernest speak again.

"Then we go to the Base now?" Ernest said.

"Yes," the calm voice said. "It is time. We go at once."

The Shadow listened at the door of the hidden laboratory. But neither voice spoke again. He heard the sound of the safe closing. Then footsteps. The Avenger activated the electronic door of the secret laboratory, ducked, and went out into the small storage closet. He let the door close be-

hind him. Cautiously, he opened the door of the storage closet. His fiery eyes quickly scanned the scene in the office of the Research Chief—the office was empty!

They had gone.

The Shadow glided swiftly out of the office, across the Main Laboratory to the door, and peered out. The corridor was empty and silent. The Avenger listened, but he heard no sound at all now. Then the sound of a car motor starting in the parking lot. He raced along the corridor to the window at the front. A small black car was just passing out the main gate. It went through, turned, and vanished in the night toward New York. The eyes of The Shadow watched it fade and vanish.

His burning eyes flashed. He had missed this time. But he would not miss again. Federal Cybernetics was somehow involved in the failures of Project Full Moon. He now knew that much, but there was much more still to learn before he could solve the puzzle and bring the guilty to justice. It was time to take stock. The Avenger turned and floated down the stairs and out across the parking lot to the fence. He went over the fence, a wraith in the night, and reached the waiting taxi. Margo and Shrevvie watched their Chief.

"Back to New York, Shrevvie," The Shadow said grimly. "We have much work to do."

The taxi drove off toward New York.

9

IT WAS DAWN over the great city as Lamont Cranston stood and stretched the weariness from his bones. He went to the window of his high office and looked out over the awakening city. New York was always a magnificent sight at dawn as its great tall buildings emerged from the night, its shining rivers and harbor stretched in the morning light as far as the eye could see, and its millions began to stir with a growing hum of sound and movement that was like the slow awakening of a sleeping giant.

At the window, Cranston enjoyed the sight as he always did, but his mind was on Project Full Moon and the events of the day before. Behind him, Margo and Stanley sprawled in chairs, the drawn weariness of the night showing on their faces. Cranston's face, with the power and endurance of The Shadow behind it, showed no trace of weariness or worry. The hooded eyes and impassive face of the wealthy socialite and international businessman were exactly the same as normal without a sign of the long hours of analyzing the strange events that now occupied the organization of The Shadow.

"We are missing a key," Cranston said without turning around.

In her chair Margo nodded. "Shall we go over it again, Lamont?"

Stanley groaned. "I can hear it without talking already."

Cranston turned from the window. He smiled at Stanley. "Once more, Stanley. From the beginning. Margo, you start."

Margo sat up and stretched. She was herself again in the

office, her disguise discarded. Her lithe figure seemed taller than it was as she stretched. Her slim legs were curled beneath her now where she sat in the big armchair, and the morning sun through the window glinted on her dark hair. She was dressed in a severe suit, as befitted her position as executive private secretary to Lamont Cranston, but the suit could not hide the smooth, strong curves of her figure. Under the suit was the trained body of the actress and secret agent for The Shadow, a body that was almost as much at Margo's command as the body of The Shadow himself. Her training and skill had often stood her in good stead in her work for The Shadow. Now she relaxed again in her chair and her eyes became serious and intense as her keen mind went to work.

"We know that about six months ago NASA started Project Full Moon. It is a top secret project, known to very few even within NASA itself or the Government. The reason for the secrecy, and the importance, is that a new fuel control system has made it possible to reach the Moon right away instead of the minimum time of two years for the regular Moon Project."

Cranston frowned. "The object was to prevent any news of the new control from becoming known until we reached the Moon. A certain development time was necessary, but Full Moon was scheduled to blast-off on its final flight to the Moon a few days ago. But . . ."

Stanley broke in. "Don't forget that the final shot had already been delayed, Boss. The other failures they had on the test shots, right? I mean, the testing had been held up."

Cranston nodded. "Correct. The project was plagued with 'accidents' from the start. The final *accident* cost the lives of three of our best astronauts!"

"And all the 'accidents' could easily have been sabotage," Margo said.

Cranston paced the floor of the office as the sun rose higher outside above the great city. "Very clever sabotage if it was, and almost certainly by someone who has close access to the Project. Someone, or some group, with great efficiency and organization has to be behind it."

"We've got the Russians," Stanley said. "They're efficient and organized."

"Yes," Margo said. "That Colonel Derian is an important man, which means that something very serious has brought him here."

"And Vaslov admitted to The Shadow that his work was involved with sabotage of the project!" Cranston said.

"Vaslov was disguised as Doctor Reigen at Federal Cybernetics," Margo said. "For some reason the Russians are very interested in Federal."

"That's easy," Stanley said. "Federal makes that new fuel control!"

"True, Stanley," Cranston said. "Federal is the most important part of Project Full Moon, and yet something is going on at Federal as shown by the strange shipments and supply of material."

"The mislabeled shipment also came from Federal," Margo said, "And they have a plant in Idaho."

Cranston paced. His impassive face showed nothing of the deep thought going on behind his hooded eyes. He turned again to Margo.

"Let me hear Burbank's report on Bryan again."

Margo looked at her notes. "Federal Cybernetics was founded six years ago by Bryan. It has specialized in rocket fuels and space-age controls. Bryan himself is an electronic genius, a scientific genius of many abilities. After his accident, the one that crippled him, he designed his own wheel chair and continued to work on the rocketry projects. It was later that he founded Federal Cybernetics. He developed the new control system, and presented it to NASA about six months ago."

In the large and lavish office of Cranston there was a long silence. Cranston paced. Margo studied her notes and frowned as if she hoped that the answer was still to be found somewhere in the history of Bryan and Federal Cybernetics. Stanley sighed softly where he sat, and looked at his watch. Stanley was hungry. Neither Cranston nor Margo seemed to have any thought of, or need for, food. Cranston stopped pacing.

"What would Bryan have to gain by sabotaging Full Moon? The fuel control is his! He has every reason for wanting the shot to the Moon to be successful," the wealthy socialite and alter-ego of The Shadow said. "And yet something odd is happening at that laboratory. Some secret work is being done, and I have a strong feeling that the Idaho plant is involved."

"What about Dr. Max Ernest?" Margo said. "You knew that it was him you overheard talking about being ready. We

know that that ledger is in his office. Is it possible that Ernest is working with the Russians?"

Cranston nodded grimly. "Yes, Margo, it is entirely possible. And that brings us back to the Russians. It looks more and more like they are behind this. They must have learned about the fuel control through Vaslov, or Reigen as he called himself. Until they get the control they are sabotaging Full Moon to give themselves time to make their own Moon Shot."

"It fits like a glove, Boss," Stanley said.

"Yes," Cranston said, "and yet I don't like it. It *feels* wrong, Stanley. They have not acted like men who want to steal the fuel control. They are acting as if they want to *learn* what is happening at Federal Cybernetics exactly as we do! When Derian questioned Margo I had the strong impression that he was trying to really learn what she knew and who she was."

"But, Lamont, that would still fit with Stanley's idea. If they want to steal the fuel control and sabotage our Project, they would still question me the same way—to know what I knew."

"True, Margo, but the way Derian questioned would also fit a man trying to learn what he did not know! If they are stealing the fuel control, they would not have to know any more. If they were only out to steal it, why are they so interested in that ledger with its extra supplies?"

"But Vaslov practically admitted that they are behind the sabotage of the project," Margo pointed out.

Cranston was silent. Then he turned to speak. He stopped. The signal light beneath his desk was silently flashing. The socialite stepped to his desk and touched a secret switch. Instantly a voice filled the room. The voice of Burbank.

"Agent Harry Vincent has reported in from Salt Lake City," the smooth voice of the Communications agent said from deep within the hidden complex of blue-lighted rooms behind the office of Cranston. "I have Agent Vincent on the radio if you wish to have him make his report personally. Otherwise I will tape it in the normal manner."

"Channel the report," Cranston said. "We need any information we can get at once!" Cranston sat at his desk, flipped a switch.

"Closed channel, simultaneous taping," Burbank's efficient voice said.

In the lavish office of Lamont Cranston the three leaned

forward in the chairs to listen. The sun was high outside now.

The delivery truck was parked in an alley on the outskirts of Salt Lake City. The magnificent Tabernacle was not far away, and the jagged and massive peaks of the Wasatch Mountains towered high over the city. Rising almost directly from the plain of the great salt lake with its wide salt flats, the Wasatch loomed so high it seemed that they could topple at any instant and engulf the city. In the distance the thin light of the first crack of dawn reflected from the mirror-surface of the vast lake.

In the alley it was still dark and nothing moved near the delivery truck. Inside the truck there was no one in the cab. To anyone who could have been there to see, the truck would have seemed abandoned, parked for the night. It showed no light and no sign of life. Had there been anyone to investigate, they could have opened the rear doors and still seen nothing but a truck filled with boxes for delivery. An innocent truck.

But this truck was far from innocent.

In a secret compartment between the cab in the front, and the boxes in the rear, a man crouched. He was bent over a small but powerful radio sender-receiver of special design that broadcast on a special channel that was scrambled for anyone else and had a range of three thousand miles when received on the proper receiver. The man smoked, and there was an ugly .45 caliber automatic at his feet. He spoke urgently into the radio.

"Harry Vincent reporting. Come in Chief. Do you read me?"

The calm voice of Lamont Cranston seemed to fill the small compartment of the truck as it spoke softly from the far-off office above Park Avenue in New York.

"I read you, Harry. Report."

Harry Vincent bent closer to the small microphone. "I located the trailer truck here in Salt Lake City and confirmed the fact that the staff car drove into it and escaped me. It was a simple trick, I should have guessed at once. Tire tracks in the truck proved the matter. I feel stupid, Chief."

"We all make errors, Harry. Forget it, and continue," the voice of Cranston said quietly.

Harry nodded as if Cranston were there. "Of course,

Chief. I also found paint scratches from the staff car, and various license plates for quick changes. I . . .”

Cranston voice was quick. “What plates, Harry?”

Harry consulted his notebook. “New York, Utah which they used, Nevada, and Oregon. They were in a rack, and one rack was empty. This empty rack had a taped label with *ID* on it.”

“Go on,” Cranston said.

“I checked the truck and the garage in which I found it very carefully, Chief. I found the uniforms they wore. They have a cache of arms, mostly Czech-made sub-machine-guns. I found nothing else in the garage. In the truck itself I found only one thing in the cab—a package of cigarettes, all gone but two. It looked like it had fallen from the pocket of someone who had sat in the cab of the trailer truck. They were Russian cigarettes, Chief!”

There was a silence from the other end of the radio. Then Cranston’s soft voice said simply, “Continue, Harry.”

“After the cab I checked out the trailer. In addition to the paint, license plates, and tire marks, I located a certain amount of dirt. I realized that it was not like the dirt around the NASA Utah Base, nor anywhere inbetween the Base and Salt Lake City. This is all desert, while this dirt was definitely red clay with streaks of granite. I took a sample and had it analyzed by a lab here. I took the record to the office of a geologist here. The result was that the dirt is typical of the Rocky Mountain area, probably from the western side of the divide in Idaho!”

This time Cranston’s voice was more agitated. “Good work, Harry. Is that all?”

“No, but it was all that is positive. I found nothing else in the garage or truck. I then checked around as much as was possible to try to locate what happened to the three men in the staff car. I had no luck at the railroad, bus terminals or airlines. No trucking companies seemed to recognize my descriptions of them. Unless they disguised themselves heavily, which is possible, they did not leave Salt Lake City on any commercial transportation. I think that this means that they left in the staff car. I think that will be traceable, Chief. There are not too many roads out of here, and a staff car should have been noticed.”

“Perhaps, Harry, but I wouldn’t count on it,” Cranston’s voice said from far-off New York. “They seem to know

what they are doing. I imagine the car would have been disguised. Is that all?"

"Yes, Chief," Harry said.

"Very well, Harry. Now I want you to make one more check. See if you can locate any private plane, probably a small jet, that flew one or more of them out of Salt Lake. Probably two of them since one had to drive the car. According to Shrevvie, one of them at least was seen here in New York. And check as quietly as you can for the unexplained presence of any Soviet agents. You know our man in Salt Lake, see what he has noticed, if anything."

"Roger, Chief," Harry said.

"Continue regular reports," Cranston said.

Harry nodded and flicked a switch on his small but powerful radio. Instantly the hidden compartment of the delivery truck became silent. Harry Vincent closed up his radio into its innocent case that looked like a regular home radio and put it back into its cardboard box. It was now only one of many such radios boxed in the truck. Harry picked up his automatic, put it into its holster, and slipped out of the hidden space and into the cab of the truck.

Moments later the truck left the alley unseen and merged with the growing morning traffic of Salt Lake City.

In the lavish office of Lamont Cranston above New York, Cranston, Margo and Stanley sat thinking about the report of Harry Vincent. It was Cranston who spoke first.

"The missing license plate is almost certainly an Idaho plate," the socialite said. "The *ID* label would indicate that, and the other states—they are all around Idaho except the New York plate. It would seem that the fake staff car operates mainly in an area around the Rocky Mountains."

"And the dirt was probably from Idaho," Stanley said.

"And Federal Cybernetics has a plant in Idaho," Margo said.

Cranston nodded. "It all begins to point to Idaho, Margo, and that 'clerical' error that may not have been quite so simple an error after all."

Stanley leaned forward. "Those Czech guns, and that pack of cigarettes from Russia, looks like its our Russian friends after all, Chief."

"Perhaps, Stanley," Cranston said. "Unless there is some other explanation for Russian cigarettes being in that truck."

"What other explanation could there be, Lamont?" Margo asked.

Cranston's hooded eyes were thoughtful. "I don't know, Margo, but I am still not convinced that the Soviet is behind all this."

"What do you plan to do next?" Margo asked.

"I think it is time to go to Idaho," Cranston said. "But first I want to check in with General Broyard and Doctor Cassill to report our suspicions about Idaho, and to find out if they have done any more in locating the actual point of failure in the last shot. I think you and Stanley had better try to get some sleep. I will need you both in Idaho."

"All right, Lamont," Margo said.

"First," Stanley said, "I eat. Never could sleep on an empty stomach, Boss."

Cranston smiled. "By all means have breakfast first, Stanley."

When Margo and Stanley had gone, Cranston called General Broyard at the NASA Utah Base. The General had nothing to report, work was continuing. Cranston made his report of his suspicions that something was happening at the Idaho plant of Federal Cybernetics, without mentioning how he had learned his details.

"My people all over the country inform me that there seems to be unusual interest in the Idaho plant of Federal, General," Cranston explained. "They cannot pinpoint it, but rumors in scientific circles indicate that something odd is going to happen there. I think we would do well to investigate."

"We'll investigate anything, Cranston. However, I have seen Rogers' report on the Soviet activity, and it looks conclusive. Rogers seems to think they will now lay off, but I mean to be certain. Our next shot is due in three days. This one cannot fail!"

"It won't, General," Cranston said quietly.

"It can't, Cranston!" Broyard said, and then hesitated for a full ten seconds. "Off the record, Cranston, but our espionage people tell me that the Soviet is much closer than we think to its own Moon shot. There is a strong indication that they too have some kind of special project. We must be first!"

"First or second is not my affair, General," Cranston said, "but sabotage is. You have nothing more to report on the actual failure of that last shot?"

"Not yet, Farina is still working on it. We have a meeting in fifteen minutes, perhaps I will know more then."

"I'll wait here until the meeting is over," Cranston said.

The socialite hung up. In his lavish office, bright now with late morning sun as the noon hour approached, Cranston sat back and continued to think. Everything pointed to Idaho and the plant of Federal Cybernetics. The question was—what was it that was being pointed to? He was, in reality, no closer to the source of the sabotage, and not really closer to the reason for the sabotage—unless the saboteurs were the Russians. If the guilty were not the Soviet, what possible reason could there be behind the sabotage of Project Full Moon? Of all people, Federal Cybernetics should be the last to sabotage the project. It was their own fuel control! !

But perhaps not everyone at Federal Cybernetics was devoted to the interest of the company. The hidden laboratory was clearly J. Wesley Bryan's own laboratory. Men had sabotaged their own efforts for private reasons before this, or for money. It would be well to check Bryan's financial situation. Then there was Dr. Max Ernest. It looked like Ernest was involved in something. He had known about the murder of Oates. The hidden laboratory could have been available to Ernest, and perhaps the Research Chief of Federal had some private work in hand.

Cranston was still thinking when the telephone suddenly rang and jarred him out of his concentration. He picked up the telephone. It was General Calvin Rogers. The special assistant to the President was excited.

"Cranston? We've located the point of failure! Farina has just found it in the fuel control itself! Small, almost nothing! Just a tiny change that could have been done at the plant of Federal and gone undetected by us!"

"So there was no need for anyone to be on the Base?"

"Not within a thousand miles! The damage was done. Bro-yard told me what you reported. And, Cranston, the part that failed was made at Federal's Idaho plant!" Rogers said.

Another direct link to Idaho!

"How is it that Professor Farina didn't notice the change in the fuel control earlier, Rogers?" Cranston said. He was thinking about Farina being apparently close to Dr. Max Ernest of Federal Cybernetics.

"He admits he doesn't know," Rogers said. "He says he

should have. He says it was a subtle change, not easy to notice in what was left of the control after the crash, but he blames himself for missing it earlier. Personally, Cranston, I think under the pressure we all were just too anxious and moved too fast."

"That is probable," Cranston agreed.

"Anyway," the voice of Rogers said. "We've got something now, and I'm not going to waste another minute. I'll stake my career on us finding those Russkis out in Idaho!"

"Perhaps," Cranston said in the quiet of the lavish office high above the city. His eyes were thoughtful.

"Broyard says you should be with us," Rogers went on. "So get on a jet and meet us at Lewiston, right? I'm taking Farina with me, he'll be needed to get some idea of just what really happened. We're going right now!"

"I'll be there," Cranston said quietly.

After he had hung up, the socialite sat back and turned in his swivel chair to face the window. His eyes suddenly flashed with the fire of The Shadow. This looked like the break, and it was time for The Shadow to enter again and end the evil once and for all. Cranston leaned forward and began to dictate crisp instructions for Margo and Stanley into the master tape recorder. There was no time to lose now.

10

THE IDAHO PLANT of Federal Cybernetics was in the country some miles from Lewiston in the high mountains. In the official staff car sent from the nearest Army base, Brigadier General Rogers sat up front beside the driver who had come with the car to meet them at the airport. Rogers and Professor Farina had been waiting impatiently when Cranston arrived by jet. Rogers immediately started toward the waiting staff car.

"Let's move, Cranston," the General said. "You came alone this time?"

"Speed was essential, General," Cranston said. "My secretary will follow."

"Right. Come on, Farina," Rogers snapped as he strode to the car. The driver jumped out and held open the door. Rogers barely nodded to the driver as he stepped into the car followed by Farina and Cranston.

Farina was obviously disturbed. "I don't know how I missed that defect of the fuel control the first time around, Cranston. It was small, and not easy to locate, but I shouldn't have missed it."

"It happens," Rogers said from the front seat as they drove.

"We're all on edge," Cranston said.

Farina nodded. "I suppose so. It's the next shot that has me jittery. I suppose I was too anxious to find the trouble in time. At least I'll know enough to inspect the control more carefully in advance this time."

"I wouldn't expect them to sabotage the same part again,"

Cranston said. "They'll try something else. There are so many parts to a rocket, that is one of the difficulties."

Farina nodded moodily. "Yes, that is the problem."

Rogers snorted in the front seat. "I'll stake my next ten years pay that they'll lay off now that they've been warned that we're on to them. And if they don't, well maybe we can put an end to any more trouble by catching them red-handed right here in the Federal Cybernetics plant."

"Let's hope so," Farina said.

The staff car drove on into the foothills of the mountains. White rivers leaped down the sides of the craggy hills, flowing in the deep gulleys that passed beneath the road under bridges. The thickly wooded forests came down to the road, a great thick mass of green pines and firs that stretched out across the mountain valleys as far as the eye could see. The road wound among the foothills with the great towering peaks of the mountains still in the distance ahead. Just as the road entered the actual mountains, the staff car reached the gate of the Federal Cybernetics plant. The driver slowed and drove up to the locked gate. Five guards came out. They were armed and in full uniform.

"Stop there!" one of the guards snapped. He was a tall man with rigid military bearing. He wore the rank of a Captain on the shoulder straps of his private guard uniform, and carried a pistol ready in his hand.

The car stopped. The Captain of the guards walked out the opened gate to the car. He approached warily and alert. His four men fanned out behind him in such a way that all the occupants of the car were covered and observed, and at the exactly right places so that no more than one could be attacked at a time from the car. Cranston watched them carefully as the Captain stood off and made Rogers reach out.

"Papers, please!" the Captain snapped.

Rogers glared, but handed out his identity papers and his official pass to visit the plant. The Captain studied them intently. Then he handed them back to Rogers, and saluted.

"Very good, General. Now the other two men, please."

"Is that necessary, young man?" Rogers said. "I can vouch for . . ."

"It is necessary, sir," the Captain said.

Cranston and Professor Farina handed out their identity and their passes. The Captain studied these with equal care. Cranston studied the Captain. He was a tall, muscular man who looked more like an officer in some Army than a plant

guard. There was a long scar on his face; the scar of an old wound. He moved with the air of a man accustomed to command, and his eyes were a cold and flat blue. Cranston frowned as he watched the Captain and the other four guards.

"Very good, General, you can pass," the Captain said as he handed back Cranston and Farina's papers.

The driver drove the car through and onto the concrete drive that led up to the low, rambling one story plant set against the magnificent backdrop of the high mountain that towered close above the plant. Cranston still frowned and looked back at the guards.

"They are very military, General," the socialite said slowly. "Very efficient. They are almost too military."

Rogers looked back thoughtfully. "I noticed that, too. It looks like Federal has hired real ex-soldiers for their guards. Soldiers not long out of service either. They must be worried about something."

"The sabotage?" Cranston said.

Rogers nodded. "Probably. It's tight security. I wish all our defense plants had better security."

"Still," Cranston mused. "It is unusual to see such a tight military security at a civilian plant."

"It should be tight," Farina said. "The work here is ultra top secret. That is why I wonder how anyone could have sabotaged the control here. We may find we have to trace its entire route from here to Utah Base."

Rogers agreed. "Probably. The weak link, that's what we have to find. There's always a weak link in every chain."

The car drove up to the main entrance and stopped. Cranston recognized the man who came out of the building to greet Rogers and his party. It was Dr. Max Ernest. The Chief of Research for Federal shook hands all around and smiled a greeting. But it was only his mouth that smiled. Cranston saw that behind the smile the eyes of Dr. Ernest showed that he was worried about something. Ernest was not pleased to see Rogers and the others. But the Doctor covered it well and led them into the building and back through a maze of corridors to the private office of J. Wesley Bryan. Cranston was surprised to see the number of corridors, the extent of the plant, and realized that the low plant was set back into the base of the mountain. It was far larger than it seemed to be.

"Ah, gentlemen!"

J. Wesley Bryan was seated in his wheel chair behind his

mammoth desk. The tiny crippled man smiled and waved them all to seats as he greeted them. Rogers watched the small man carefully. Farina appeared nervous to Cranston. The socialite himself assumed his most impassive face. Bryan seemed most interested in Cranston.

"So, Cranston, you've come to look at the competition, eh?" the small man said from his wheelchair. "I've admired your work for some time. Perhaps you can admire some of mine."

"Everyone admires your work, Mr. Bryan," Cranston said quietly. "Few people have done as much in rocketry. The fuel control alone is a triumph of achievement."

Bryan nodded with satisfaction. "It was a breakthrough, wasn't it? Yes, I might say I am proud of our work there. But we will do more, much more! Eh, Ernest?"

The Research Director nodded agreement. Dr. Ernest was still standing just inside the door of Bryan's private office. Cranston saw that for some reason Max Ernest still seemed highly uneasy. Was the Research Director worried for himself, worried about some discovery being made if anyone looked too closely?

"Yes!" Bryan said eagerly. "We are doing work that will make the whole world sit up and notice!" And the small man laughed. "But enough of my work, what brings you gentlemen here? The next Moon shot is only days away. I'm surprised that you could find the time, especially Professor Farina."

"If there is a shot," General Rogers said.

Bryan arched an eyebrow. "*If*, General?"

"Sabotage," Rogers said.

Bryan was silent for a moment. The small crippled man seemed to be thinking. Then he frowned.

"I still cannot understand how anyone could get on the Utah Base to sabotage the project," Bryan said. "I would have said that it was impossible. Still, there is no denying that something has been going wrong. I have, of course, checked the control completely. I cannot find any reason for failure."

"Perhaps it wasn't necessary for anyone to get on the Utah Base," Rogers said bluntly. "I'm convinced that our troubles are sabotage, not accident, but I am also sure that no one could have gotten onto the Base."

Bryan's eyes snapped. "You are implying that the sabotage was done somewhere else—perhaps here? !"

"Perhaps," Rogers said.

"Ridiculous! You've seen our security, General! How could anyone get on our property to sabotage anything?"

"We've located the cause of the last failure," Farina said. "It was in the fuel control system. A small change in valving. It could have been done almost anywhere."

"But not here!" Bryan thundered. "Not only do we have strong plant security, the actual production and test facilities for the components of the control are completely secure. We test each component completely before we let it out!"

"Perhaps," General Rogers said, "But the unit *was* sabotaged. There is no doubt now. Somewhere between here and Utah Base the fuel control valving was altered! That is sabotage not an accident. And the trail must begin here. Now if the sabotage was not done here in the plant itself, then we must track it all the way. On the road, at shipping depots and transfer points if any! We. . ."

Rogers was talking hard and fast. At each point in his tirade the General emphasized his point with a pound of his fist against the mammoth desk of J. Wesley Bryan. Cranston watched and listened. The General, for all his emphatic tirade, was being circumspect with Bryan. Cranston was not entirely convinced by the protests of Bryan, but, then, he knew more about the secret work and strangely hidden amounts of material. He could not reveal this knowledge without revealing the presence of The Shadow. But he knew it, and he listened carefully. There was still one great fact on the side of Bryan—Cranston could think of no reason for the crippled genius to sabotage his own fuel control system! The socialite looked toward Max Ernest. The Research Director was another matter—could it be some kind of jealousy? Men had killed for less, and Cranston decided to watch Ernest very closely while they were . . .

Cranston stopped thinking. J. Wesley Bryan had suddenly held up his hand. General Rogers seemed annoyed. Farina seemed afraid. Cranston leaned forward.

"Professor Morgan!" Bryan said, snapped. "I wonder." The small man turned in his wheel chair to face Dr. Max Ernest. "Has the clearance come for Morgan, Max?"

"Not yet," Max Ernest said.

General Rogers narrowed his sharp eyes. "Professor Morgan? Who is this Morgan? What clearance?"

Bryan leaned forward grimly. "Professor Frederick Morgan. He came with credentials to observe. But some of his papers were old so we have not allowed him access to anything

secret pending the receipt of proper papers. It is not unusual, papers get out of date very quickly, so we had no reason to really suspect him. However, in this case the papers in question were very old, so we have restricted him to unclassified work." Bryan again looked at Max Ernest. "The clearance is taking a long time, Max."

"Yes, Ernest said. "Too long."

"He wants to study classified material?" Rogers snapped.

"Yes," Ernest said.

"Where is he now?"

"We put him up in our visitor's quarters," Bryan explained. "We're a long way out of town, and there is nowhere else to stay. Of course, at the moment, he is probably in one of our unclassified labs."

"But he's on the grounds?" Rogers said.

"Yes," Max Ernest said.

"Get him up here," Rogers snapped. "Is this kind of thing usual, Bryan?"

Bryan nodded. Max Ernest was on the telephone ordering the guards to bring Professor Morgan to the office. Bryan explained.

"We are a research company, you know. We get a lot of visitors. As a matter of fact, it is part of our Government work to allow access to our facilities to qualified scientists, the Government insists. Of course, we do a complete security check. We never let a visitor get close to classified material until he has been completely cleared."

"But you have a lot of visitors?" Cranston said.

"Yes," Bryan said.

"Can you be absolutely certain none of them get near anything classified?" Rogers snapped.

"Well . . ." Bryan began, and then shrugged. "As far as is possible we are sure."

"But not absolutely?" Rogers said.

Bryan shrugged again. "Nothing in this world is absolute, General. Perhaps a very clever spy could have fooled us. I . . .

The outer door opened and Bryan stopped whatever he was going to say. All eyes in the office turned to look at the door and the man who came through the door into the office. He was flanked by two of the military-looking security guards. Their guns were slung now, but the guards looked ready to instantly unsling them and go into action. The man they brought into the office was furious.

"What is the meaning of this, Bryan? !"

Professor Morgan was a tall, thin man. Cranston looked at him and his impassive face almost showed surprise. There was something familiar about Professor Morgan. The tall man stood with a stiff and rigid carriage. His hands were long and sinuous, like small snakes where they moved angrily now. His thin body was as erect as steel. He moved like a snake, sinuously, and his voice was cold. Cranston tried to place the man. He could not. It was the face. Morgan's face was not the same, that was the trouble. Whoever he reminded Cranston of had a different face. Morgan had a thick face, too thick for his tall body. A bulbous nose and a heavy mustache. It did not fit. Cranston stared.

"Are you Professor Morgan?" General Rogers snapped.

"I am," the tall man said. "Who the devil are you?"

"My name is Rogers, General Calvin Rogers. May I ask what seems to be holding up your credentials?" Rogers said coldly.

Morgan laughed. "Is that it? One simple paper? You people are very nervous, eh? Have no fear, my clearance will be. . ."

The tall man got no farther. Cranston saw it—the nose was false! It was clear to his sharp eyes. He stood, but Rogers beat him. The General had apparently seen, and guessed, the same thing at the same instant. Rogers stepped quickly to Morgan and pulled the nose. It came off in his hand. Morgan's hand snaked toward his coat. The two guards jumped. Morgan was fast as lightning, and had the gun almost out when the two guards grappled with him. They held him.

"So?" Rogers said, and pulled off the fake mustache. The General touched the man's cheeks, nodded, and scraped hard. The cheeks, too, came away, revealing the thin, cobra-like face of the tall, thin man.

"Colonel Derian!" Cranston snapped. It came out without thinking. Cranston railed at himself inside. He was not supposed to know the Soviet Colonel, but his face showed nothing and he quickly covered. "Colonel Derian of the Soviet Secret Police! Commissioner Weston has shown me his picture many times."

"Derian?" Rogers said, and his face split with a grin. "The big chief of the Secret Cell himself? Well, well! We have a real catch, eh? So now we know! Came to do your own dirty work this time, Derian? I warned Misygyn!"

"Did you, General?" Colonel Derian said with a sneer.

"He should have listened to me!" Rogers thundered. "Now it is too late. We've stopped the sabotage, and we have you too. The whole world will be told. Take him out and lock him up!"

The guards took Derian out. Cranston frowned behind his hooded eyes. Rogers turned to Bryan.

"It looks like we arrived just in time, Bryan. I suggest you send for the State Police at once, and alert the FBI. The police can turn him over to the FBI in Lewiston. He's much too big a fish to keep around."

Cranston wondered. It was all very sudden, very lucky! Was it just a coincidence, or was Derian only a trick to convince Farina, Rogers and himself that Derian was the saboteur? There was only one way to be sure—The Shadow would have to appear to Colonel Derian!

"I suggest we all wait for the police," Cranston said. "In the meantime, I would like to wash up, perhaps rest."

"Good idea, Cranston," Rogers agreed. "Can you lend us some quarters, Bryan?"

"I'll check the control security," Professor Farina said.

They agreed, and Cranston and Rogers were conducted to quarters in the visitors rooms of the plant. In his room Cranston listened for a moment. All was quiet.

Five minutes later, had there been anyone to see, they might have seen the door to Cranston's room open and close. They might have blinked and rubbed their eyes as a black shadow seemed to slip out into the corridor and vanish.

11

IN THE WINDOWLESS storageroom of the plant basement, Colonel Derian sat alert against the wall. He had not been tied in any way, but the door that he had heard locked was made of solid steel. The room was a storage area for dangerous chemicals, and was built with thick, explosion-proof walls. For a time the Colonel just sat there listening. When he was sure that no one was in the corridor outside, he began to consider his position.

"The concrete is too thick," the cobra-like Colonel said to himself aloud. It was a trick he had learned in many years in prison. To keep calm and sane it was good to talk aloud. "The door is steel. However, they must feed me, and sooner or later they must come to interrogate me or move me. They will want to know what I am doing here. Yes, some of them will want to know what I am doing here. I wonder why. . ."

The Colonel stopped speaking. His cobra face became alert. His long neck was rigid and cocked at an angle as he listened to something. Derian thought that he had heard a sound—a very faint sound, but a definite sound. His cold and glittering eyes flicked around the dark store room. There were no windows in the room, but it was not pitch black. A small work light was set high up against the wall and cast a feeble light that barely reached a quarter of the concrete room. Beyond this circle of light, where Derian sat, there was a deeper darkness of vague shadows.

It was one of these shadows that Derian's glittering eyes now looked at.

The shadow had seemed to move.

Derian tensed like a coiled snake and prepared to jump if necessary.

The low laugh was soft in the room. Soft and macabre. A chilling sound.

"There will be no need for defense, Colonel Derian," a low, strong voice said.

Derian's eyes glinted. "Who are you?"

There was no fear in the cold voice of the Soviet Secret Policeman, no panic, no apparent surprise at the sudden laugh and voice from the shadows of the room.

"I am called The Shadow, Colonel Derian, and I fight all evil!"

"So?" Derian said calmly. "How did you get in here? Where are you? I cannot see you."

The laugh reverberated. "No walls stop The Shadow, Colonel, and I am in front of you. Look closely, Colonel Derian."

The Colonel peered into the shadows. He saw a faintly deeper area of black. Then he saw the eyes—two fiery eyes that glowed in the darkness. He saw the blood-red fire-opal girasol ring, and he saw, in the red light of that ring, the long face and hawk-nose of The Shadow. The Colonel neither moved nor flinched.

"Yes, I see you now. You wear a disguise."

"No, Colonel, not a disguise. This is as I appear to all men. This is my power. Your mind is open to me, Derian, I know all the evil that lurks in the hearts of men!"

"So?" Derian said quietly. "What do you want with me? Why have you come here?"

"I come to learn what you know! I am here to stop the sabotage of Project Full Moon! You will tell me all that you know, Colonel Derian! You will tell me why you have come here!"

The laugh of Colonel Derian was louder and colder than the eerie laugh of The Shadow. "I will tell you nothing!" Derian said. "This is some trick! You think I'm a fool? This is some American trick to learn what I know. Fool, do you suppose I believe that you can come through walls without a trick? There is a secret door, of course. You have been sent to trick me, and you will not!"

The Shadow's voice was stern. "This is no trick, Colonel! I am The Shadow, I defeat all evil men. I must know what you are doing here. I will know!"

Suddenly the tall Colonel lunged. His trained muscles

hurled him up to his feet and across the room in one powerful leap. He reached the spot where The Shadow stood.

The Shadow was gone.

An amused laugh came from another dark area of the room.

Derian swore and leaped again.

The clutching hands of the Soviet Colonel closed on empty air.

The laugh of The Shadow was mocking. "You cannot catch me, Colonel Derian. No one can catch The Shadow. You will tell me now what I must know. Your mind is open to me. You feel my power."

Derian swore. But the tall Colonel did not lunge again. He knew when it was time to change his tactics. He peered into the shadows. He searched the room with his eyes from where he stood just outside the circle of light. He rubbed his eyes and peered again. He shook his head as if it were suddenly heavy.

The hard voice of The Shadow intoned. "Your head is heavy, Colonel Derian. Your eyes are heavy. You feel your brain growing soft, warm."

Derian rubbed his eyes hard and shook his head. He tried to clear the fog from his brain. He suddenly became aware of the heavy mist that seemed to hang before his eyes, the thick cloud that filled his mind, the soft delicate fingers of some power that seemed to be touching his brain. For an instant he felt panic—the cloud on his mind had grown thick and heavy, so thick he could not see the room! He uttered a single cry of anger—and then he smiled. The cloud filled his brain and he stopped struggling. He felt peaceful, at rest. At some command he thought he heard he went and sat down again inside the circle of light where he had been when The Shadow first laughed.

The Shadow emerged from the darkness. His black-shrouded shape loomed over the seated Colonel. His fiery eyes burned with the power learned so long ago in the Orient from the great Master Chen T'a Tze.

"Why are you here, Colonel Derian?"

The Colonel brushed at his eyes. "To learn the source of the sabotage of the project."

"Why here specifically?"

"Because it was the fuel control that failed on the last shot," Derian said promptly now.

"You knew that?" The Shadow demanded. "But the NASA people only learned that today!"

"Of course I knew. Our scientists found the cause a week ago," the Colonel snapped with a spark of his unclouded personality.

The Shadow's eyes burned as he stared at the Colonel. Then they suddenly flashed! There was the key! What he had missed! Vaslov had spoken of "sabotage" and "the project"! He had assumed that Vaslov meant the NASA Project, Project Full Moon. But Vaslov had not! Vaslov had meant a *Soviet project*!

"Your Government has a special project to reach the Moon very soon?" The Shadow demanded.

"Yes. Any day we will be first on the Moon. Our Project Far-Space is ready. We would have been on the Moon weeks ago but for the failures."

"You have had many failures?"

"Five. All sabotage. There is no doubt."

"And you suspect the fuel control?"

"Of course. It is the heart of the project. It was the new fuel control that made the accelerated project possible. We all wondered."

"Wondered?" The Shadow snapped quickly.

Derian laughed. The cloud that held his mind in the power of The Shadow did not change his personality or his freedom of expression. The power only made it impossible for him to not answer the questions of The Shadow, indeed it made him want to answer. But his mind was still his own mind if no longer in his full control. The Colonel laughed sarcastically.

"I knew nothing of the project until they called me in after the fourth sabotage act," the Colonel said. "The instant I came in I smelled something wrong. The new fuel control was supposedly developed in a secret rocket lab of ours in the Urals. It was the work of an ex-German scientist we had, ah, borrowed shall we say, after we defeated the Nazis. This German had a good record as a scientist, yes, but not good enough to have made the brilliant theoretical leap that was at the heart of the new fuel control! I saw at once that many of our rocket experts had doubts about this, too. I made some discreet investigations." The Colonel smiled up at The Shadow as if they were old comrades in arms. "We have our methods, you understand. Well, it did not take me

long to learn that the United States also had a special Moon project!"

Derian snorted bitterly. "It was simple to learn that the United States project was almost exactly at the same stage as ours, that it too had been held up by sabotage, and that our special fuel cell was not very special but was similar to the one made by Federal Cybernetics in this country! You can imagine that I had that ex-German in for a small talk. Unfortunately, he died before he could tell me how he had happened to develop a cell so much like an American cell. At the same time I conducted a complete investigation into the sabotage. I had no luck—and then the last failure came and we traced it instantly to a minor change in the functioning of the fuel control. At this point it became clear to me, by studies I had made, that our fuel control was not similar, it was *identical* to the United States control. At that point I came to this country to see just exactly what was going on. I traced the control to Federal Cybernetics, and activated Vaslov to help me learn what was happening."

The Shadow nodded grimly now. "And you learned what I have learned—that Federal, or someone *at* Federal, is conducting some extra but parallel work, that more material comes into the Main Laboratory than should, and that only half the results are sent to NASA Utah Base! That someone is sabotaging *both* projects!"

"Yes," Derian said. "But who? And why? Somehow, for some reason, Federal's fuel control was given to us! Why? Who in Federal gave us the identical fuel control, why did they give it to us and the United States, and why then sabotage both projects!"

The Shadow's piercing eyes burned into the tall Colonel of Secret Police. "Did you or your people kill Major Oates?"

"No," Derian said.

The Shadow nodded. He concentrated his powers to release Derian from the cloud on his mind. He left Derian with full memory of all that had been said, of all the questions. Then he released the Colonel—an unclouded mind thought better, and The Shadow now knew that he and Colonel Derian were working on the same side no matter how much he might detest the snake-like Soviet officer. Derian shook his head, blinked, and looked up at The Shadow as his mind cleared and returned to his own control. Derian stared at The Shadow for a long minute in silence.

"So, we are on the same mission after all," the Colonel said quietly. "With certain differences."

The Shadow's eyes glowed. "At the moment, Colonel Derian, we are on the same errand. And we have the same questions. Who at Federal Cybernetics gave both countries the same fuel control, and why?"

Derian thought where he sat on the concrete floor. "If it were some sympathizer with our cause, the Communist cause, then why give it to both? No, that would make no sense."

"The same for the United States," The Shadow said.

"So it cannot be patriotism," Derian said. "More, if one person in the company gave the cell to the United States, and a different person gave it to the Soviet, then it would be very unlikely that both projects would be sabotaged!"

"True," The Shadow agreed. "If, say, the company was loyal to the United States, but one man wanted the Soviet to have the cell, that man would sabotage only the American project."

"Or the company, learning of the defection of its control to us, would then sabotage only our effort!" Derian said. "But who would sabotage both projects! And why? That is what I cannot understand!"

The Shadow's eyes blazed up as his mind concentrated on the seemingly impossible problem. It was not logical—there was the crux. It made no sense as it stood now. Something was missing; some key that would explain the contradictory facts. He could tell by Colonel Derian's face that the Russian could understand it no better than he could. And there was still the problem of *who*? With the Soviet ruled out, only the company was left. But why would Bryan sabotage his own efforts?

"What," The Shadow said quietly, "if there is more than one man or group? What if we have two groups working at cross purposes?"

Derian's cold eyes watched The Shadow. "It is possible, yes. I have thought of that. This Dr. Max Ernest, there is something suspicious about him. Then there is that woman, Freda Talent. Then there is Bryan himself."

The Shadow nodded. He did not tell Derian that at least he was sure that Freda Talent was not involved since she had simply let Margo assume her place, but the other two possibilities were very real. Was Max Ernest working against his own boss and company? Was Bryan? It was possible on both counts, and yet—the same problem was still

there: *why*? What did either man have to gain? And why *give* the control, and then sabotage the projects?

"Time!" The Shadow said.

"What?" Derian said.

The eyes of The Shadow burned. "They gained time! They delayed the projects. But for what? Why do they need a delay?"

Derian was about to answer when The Shadow suddenly raised his hand. The fire-opal girasol glowed red in the silent room. The Shadow had heard the approach of men, many men. They were coming for Derian. The Shadow thought of his course of action, but he had no choice—he did not yet know enough to reveal himself or stop the removal of Derian.

"I cannot interfere yet, Colonel, you understand?"

Derian nodded. "Of course. One of us must remain at large. I shall attempt to escape and rejoin you. But the sabotage must be stopped—for both our sides."

The Shadow nodded and faded into the dark areas of the room. Moments later the door opened and General Rogers came in with three of the security guards of Federal. Rogers nodded to Derian, and the guards stepped forward and hoisted the Colonel to his feet.

"A little strong arm work, General?" Derian said with a thin smile.

"We don't work that way, Derian," Rogers snapped. "We are turning you over to the State Police, they will hand you to the FBI. What the FBI does with you I don't care."

"Very commendable, General, no one will accuse you of atrocities, eh?" And Derian laughed as the guards took him out and marched him along the corridor toward the stairs up.

Behind the guards and Rogers, a black shape loomed in the dim corridor and floated silently after them.

12

IN THE LATE afternoon Idaho sun the security guards marched Colonel Derian across the open ground in front of the plant to a State Police car that waited just inside the open gate. Three troopers stepped out, took the prisoner inside the car, and one of them signed for the prisoner in full view of Bryan, Max Ernest and Professor Farina, not to mention many of the workers at the plant.

In the shadow of a bush set against the facade of the plant building. The Shadow watched. He saw J. Wesley Bryan and Farina looking around. Even at the distance he could read their lips clearly—they were wondering where Lamont Cranston was. But there was not time now for The Shadow to resume his alter-ego and still follow the State Police car.

The Shadow had to follow the state police—there was something very wrong about the police car.

The Shadow could not place what was wrong. In itself that puzzled the hidden Avenger—his powers and instant recall should have made him know what was wrong if something was wrong. The only explanation was that there had been something that he had seen in a flash and that was gone too quickly for even The Shadow to have it permanently impinged on his memory. It was not the car itself, that was a completely authentic State Police car. It was not the uniforms or the manner of the three troopers who had hustled the Colonel into the car the instant he arrived, and climbed in themselves. Their actions and manner had been exactly as The Shadow would have expected.

But it was something that The Shadow had seen in a split

second and then lost. The Avenger knew the powers of his mind, and if he had felt that something was not right, then he would follow the State Police car. And he had not an instant to waste. Already Rogers was leaning in to say some final words to the state troopers. The Shadow bent quickly over the small radio-ring on his left hand.

"Stanley, are you here?" The Shadow intoned in a low voice.

Instantly the soft voice of the chauffeur-bodyguard-agent answered. "Here, Chief. I followed your instructions and am now within sight of the plant in the hired car. I can see the State Police car."

"Good, Stanley. Proceed on plan One to a point three hundred yards to the right of the gate on the road. There is a large boulder there that comes to the road."

"Roger," Stanley said.

The radio ring on the left hand of The Shadow went silent. The Avenger watched the State Police car move off slowly to the gate. He turned, and, crouched low, made his way to the right in the shelter of the bushes along the wall of the plant. At the corner there was a hundred feet of open parking area before the beginning of a line of trees that bordered the high fence. The Avenger looked back and saw that everyone was watching the police car as it went out the gate and turned right toward Lewiston. With the speed of a shifting shadow he bounded across the open area and vanished into the rows of trees. No one saw the sudden black shape, and moments later he was over the high fence and at the boulder beside the highway.

The State Police car came past already driving fast.

Moments later, the police car barely out of sight around the first curve of the twisting highway, a small green car appeared from the same direction also driving fast. As it neared the boulder it slowed and the door on the right swung open. In a single bound The Shadow was in the car, the door was closed, and the car raced on after the State Police car.

"Faster, Stanley!" The Shadow commanded.

Stanley pressed down on the accelerator and guided the green car expertly around the tortuous curves of the highway that wound through the mountains and the deep pine forest. The chauffeur-agent of The Shadow was an expert driver, and the small green car clung to the curves like a racing car.

"They're going awfully fast for a trooper car," Stanley said.

"Yes, Stanley," The Shadow said.

"There they are!" Stanley said as the police car came in sight ahead on a short straightaway.

"Drop back and do not let them guess we are after them," The Shadow commanded.

Stanley eased the green car back and drove so as to have an occasional glimpse of the police car ahead as it vanished around the curves. In his seat The Shadow opened a map. It was a map of the area. The fiery eyes of the Avenger studied the open map closely.

"There is no crossroad for ten miles, Stanley," The Shadow said, his voice quiet and efficient now. "There is only one major crossroad between here and Lewiston. Where is Margo?"

"Probably on her way from Lewiston with Harry Vincent, Chief," Stanley said. "Harry reported in that he found no private flights out of Salt Lake City, but he did locate the trail of the staff car. It was sighted on the road up toward Idaho. Harry lost the trail. When he reported in, Margo told him to meet her in Lewiston like you ordered."

"Good," The Shadow said.

The Avenger bent over his ring. In the glow of twilight and fading sun the black-garbed figure looked like some great ancient symbol of justice where he sat in the green car. His eyes burned intensely as he spoke into his ring radio.

"Come in, Margo!"

There was a silence, and then the calm voice of The Shadow's number one agent. "Margo here, Chief."

"Where are you?" The Shadow demanded.

"On the road from Lewiston with Harry Vincent," the voice of the beautiful woman said.

The Shadow studied his map. His long finger with the glowing red fire-opal girasol on it traced a back road. "Margo, have you passed the small hamlet of Broken Cliff yet?"

"No, Chief."

"When you reach the village you will see a mountain dirt road. Take this road and drive as fast as possible on it to where it intersects the highway south. Report to me when you reach that point."

"Yes, Chief," Margo said quietly, and the radio went silent.

The Shadow sat back and his eyes glowed as he rode in the grim and silent chase. Stanley guided the small green car in a steady chase of the police car ahead that appeared and vanished and appeared again as the two cars drove as

fast as they could on the winding highway. The chase continued for the ten tortuous miles. Then there was a long straightaway before the Lewiston highway intersected the highway toward the south.

"Fall back!" The Shadow commanded.

Stanley slowed and let the police car draw away. The Shadow watched intently. If his suspicions were correct, the police car would not go straight on to Lewiston. He watched, his fiery eyes concentrating on the distant police car that moved through the rapidly fading mountain twilight. Then he suddenly leaned forward like a hawk about to pounce down from the sky.

The police car slowed—and turned onto the highway that led to the south!

"Go past, Stanley," The Shadow commanded.

Stanley drove the green car past the intersection. Not fifty yards up the highway to the south the police car was parked! The Shadow smiled grimly as the green car drove past at full speed and was soon out of sight of the police car. They had, as he had expected they would, stopped to be sure that the green car was not following them. Now, with the green car speeding past without a hint of slackening its pace, they would not be suspicious.

"Stop now, Stanley."

Stanley brought the green car to a silent halt.

"Turn back carefully and follow them along the south highway but out of sight."

Stanley turned back and drove to the crossroad again. The police car was gone.

"Now fast!" The Shadow commanded.

Stanley nodded, and the green car leaped forward and raced along the southern road. The twilight grew ever more purple as Stanley and The Shadow raced on in pursuit. Some ten more minutes passed as The Shadow studied his map with growing concern. Then his ring radio suddenly spoke.

"We are at the highway now, Chief," the voice of Margo said.

"Good!" The Shadow responded. "In about ten minutes a State Police car will come toward you, probably going very fast, with four men in it. Block its path and capture it if possible. Be careful, they are well-armed. You will probably need your weapons. You will find Colonel Derian in the car, Margo. He is on our side. Whatever you do, do not let them pass!"

"Yes, Chief," Margo said.

The radio became silent again. The Shadow peered ahead. The chase went on. Then, suddenly, Stanley spoke.

"There they are!"

The State Police car was driving fast. As the green car with The Shadow in it came into sight, the police car suddenly began to drive even faster!

"They've spotted us now," Stanley said.

"Catch them!" The Shadow commanded.

Stanley pushed the accelerator to the floor and the green car tore ahead on the winding highway. It swayed and slewed as Stanley fought it around the curves. But they could not gain on the police car. The troopers drove as wildly and expertly as Stanley, and the police car held its lead. The Shadow's fiery eyes were grim as he watched the chase. Minutes passed and still they did not gain.

"I wish I had our car, Chief" Stanley said. "We'd catch them then."

"Keep trying, Stanley, but do not lose them in any event!" The Shadow ordered.

Stanley nodded and pushed the small green car as fast as it could go. Slowly, on the curves, they began to gain. But so slowly that it was hardly noticeable. Then both cars entered a long straight stretch with a deep ravine on the left of the highway. The police car began to pull away! On the straight road it was faster than the green car. Stanley hung on. The police car went around a curve, swaying wide above the yawning abyss of the mountain ravine in the fading twilight. The green car of The Shadow followed around the curve. Stanley gasped aloud.

"Chief!"

The sight that met the eyes of The Shadow seemed for a split second like a frozen tableau. The police car hurtled down the road. The ravine yawned dark to the left. The light of day was fading in a purple mountain haze. And directly ahead of the police car as it hurtled forward was another car! Two people, a man and a woman, stood beside the third car with guns in their hands.

Perhaps it was the deepening twilight. Or just the speed of the police car. But it was obvious that the driver of the police car, perhaps watching The Shadow's car behind him, did not see the third car or the armed man and woman until he was almost on it. Perhaps the driver of the police car simply misjudged his ability as a driver. Whatever the

case, the police car, hurtling like a bullet along the narrow highway, sped straight at the third car that blocked the road, and did not turn until the last minute. It then turned a fraction and tried to drive past between the ravine and the blocking car. It did not make it.

The police car struck the front fender of the blocking car, slewed for a breathless instant, and went far out into the empty space above the yawning chasm of the ravine.

Faint above the roar of his own motor The Shadow heard the despairing screams of the men in the police car as it fell through the purple twilight into the dark night of the bottom of the rocky ravine. There was a rending, tearing, horrible crash.

Then silence.

A small explosion and a burst of flame at the bottom of the ravine.

Stanley brought the green car to a halt in front of the third car where Margo and Harry Vincent stood looking down into the ravine at the licking flames from the crushed police car.

Where the smashed police car lay at the bottom of the ravine there was no sound but the faint noise of flames licking at metal. Small tendrils of fire crept from the car out into the brush of the rocky chasm. The car had hit, bounced twice, and come to rest leaning at a tortured angle against a giant boulder. Nothing moved in the glare of the fiery flames that burned the smashed and twisted metal. An arm hung out the front window. A body lay fifty feet away smashed against a boulder. Here, at the bottom of the deep abyss, there was only death and darkness and the licking flames that crackled with the intense heat.

Then the night itself moved.

A looming shadow passed across the lighter sky far above where the road was on the mountainside.

The Shadow stood beside the wreck.

He glided to the body that had been flung out. It was one of the troopers and he was dead. The Shadow returned to the flaming car. His powers resistant to the heat, he peered into the crushed interior. The trooper with his arm out was dead. The Shadow looked into the rear seat and saw Colonel Derian. The Russian had died the violent death he must have known would come to him someday—but Derian could

never have guessed that he would die in a car crash on a lonely highway in Idaho!

The Shadow's eyes suddenly glowed—the fourth man was not in the car.

The black-garbed Avenger began to search. His night vision gave him a clear view of the bottom of the ravine. He found the fourth man within minutes. The man, a trooper, had been flung out of the car at the first crash and lay fifty feet up the side of the rocky hollow. The Shadow floated swiftly to him. He bent over—The man was not dead! Dying, but not yet dead. The man moved his lips weakly, his eyelids fluttered in pain.

The Shadow bent low, forcing his powers deep into the dying brain. The man moaned softly, squirmed as the cloud rolled into his bare consciousness. The Shadow had no choice. He must know who these troopers had really been.

Because he knew now what he had seen in a brief flash at the plant of Federal Cybernetics as the troopers took Derian away—it had been the face of this man on the ground!

A brief, split-second sight of the face of this man. A face his memory had known—the face of the phony Colonel described by Harry Vincent! This was one of the men who had been outside the Utah Base when the Moon rocket had failed! One of the men who had killed Major Oates in the grounds of the Soviet mansion!

That is what he had seen that had made him sense that something was not right about the supposed State Troopers! They were not troopers.

“Who are you?” The Shadow said as he bent low over the dying man.

“Who do you work for? What is your mission?” The Shadow demanded.

The dying man groaned.

“I command you to tell me who you are!”

The dying man's eyes suddenly opened. Flat eyes, near death and clouded by the powers of The Shadow, but the disciplined eyes of a man who obeyed commands, and who had now been commanded. His lips moved, his body seemed to try to move to attention.

“Group . . . Group . . .” the man tried to force out, tried again. “. . . Group Leader . . . Ten . . . Leader Ten . . . CYPHER Command Base . . . Idaho . . .”

And the man was dead.

The Shadow stared down in the night. His fiery eyes blazed up in anger.

CYPHER!

Again CYPHER! !

The eyes of The Shadow flashed in the dark of the ravine where the flickering flames of the burning wreck played across his hawk-like features. He stared down at the dead man. CYPHER! Then it had all been the evil organization that offered its services of death and destruction and violence to anyone who paid it. He should have guessed. The skill and efficiency of the actions, the coldly deadly performance. It was all clear now.

CYPHER.

Once more The Shadow was faced with the ruthless band of renegades from a hundred Armies; the bitter militants of a hundred countries, West and East, Communist and Capitalist, who had turned against every country; the secret Army that believed in only force and power, and sold its services to any bidder! Once more it was CYPHER the black Avenger must stop, and he turned now and vanished again into the night.

Behind him the four dead men lay silent, the flames licked at broken metal and flickered in the empty ravine.

Ahead of him there was CYPHER—and whoever had hired the evil organization.

Because CYPHER never worked for itself. Behind CYPHER there was someone who had hired the evil Army.

The eyes of The Shadow burned as he thought of whoever had hired CYPHER this time. As he moved slowly back up the side of the ravine he thought about the guards at the Federal Cybernetics plant—CYPHER men, of course. But who had hired them, and who knew that they were CYPHER? Who . . .

“Chief! !”

The voice slashed through the night. Margo’s voice. From the ring radio on The Shadow’s hand.

“It’s CYPHER! They . . .”

Silence.

The Shadow listened, but there was nothing more. Up on the road where the last light of twilight was still visible there were sounds, the sound of many feet.

The Shadow began to climb swiftly up the side of the steep ravine toward the last light above.

13

SOME MINUTES earlier, at the exact moment when, down in the ravine, The Shadow had discovered one CYPHER man alive, Margo and Harry Vincent checked the damage to their hired car from where the police car had side-swiped it. The entire left front fender was crushed in.

"I don't think we can move it, Margo," Harry Vincent said.

"No," Margo said.

They were both down intently studying the damage. Stanley stood looking down into the dark ravine. Far below, the flames of the burning car flickered in the yawning maw of blackness. Stanley peered down to see what happened below where he knew The Shadow was inspecting the wreck.

None of them heard the soft footsteps that stepped close in the mountain twilight.

"Just freeze," a hard voice said.

Stanley whirled. His hand snaked toward the automatic inside his uniform jacket. He saw the men who stood in a semi-circle on the road all around himself, Margo and Harry Vincent. Stanley moved his hand away from his gun. All ten of the men were armed with Czech-made sub-machineguns. The leader who had spoken nodded.

"That's a smart boy," his hard voice said lazily.

Margo and Harry Vincent stood up slowly from where they had been crouched. The cold eyes of the leader of the men flicked toward Margo and Harry.

"Be cool now," the man said.

Margo looked at the leader. She recognized the black uniform with the white circle of CYPHER on the breast, and the mark of the rank of a CYPHER Group Sub-Leader. She

also recognized the insignia of the United States Special Forces on his black uniform, and the ribbons of the Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart with two oak leaves. The other nine men could have been a cross section of the United Nation—all in the black uniform with the white circle of CYPHER, and all with the insignia of the Armies of their own deserted countries.

"Everybody keep their cool and we'll all get along," the Group Sub-Leader said. His cold eyes flickered again. "Where's the other one? Cranston?"

Stanley, Margo and Harry were silent.

"Check the cars," the Sub-Leader said without looking at his men.

Two black-uniformed soldiers checked each car. They all shook their heads. The Sub-Leader considered Harry, Margo and Stanley.

"Was he with you? My orders say get Cranston."

"He wasn't with us," Margo said.

"Where is he?" the Sub-Leader asked.

Margo shrugged, spread her hands out in front of her. "I don't know."

Margo passed her left hand close to her face. The small ring radio was directly before her lips. "Chief! It's CYPHER! They . . ."

The Sub-Leader jerked his head. A black-uniformed soldier stepped to Margo and hit her in the face. She went down and out. The Sub-Leader watched Stanley and Harry Vincent. Both men stood helpless. The Sub-Leader nodded.

"Cool, man, cool, that's the way to play," the Sub-Leader said lazily. "Okay, she got out a warning. Probably that Cranston is somewhere around. Numbers Eight, Nine and Ten stay here. Take cover and see if anyone comes."

The three soldiers named slipped out of sight in the night that was not dark. The rest marched Margo, Stanley and Harry Vincent along the road. A quarter of a mile away a truck waited. The CYPHER soldiers herded Margo, Stanley and Harry into the back, and four climbed in with them. The other three got into the cab. The truck drove away on the highway toward the south.

The night became silent again.

The two cars sat in the road.

Where they hid in the dark the three CYPHER soldiers were alert, their sub-machineguns ready, their eyes watching the two abandoned cars and the road.

They never saw the fiery eyes that suddenly watched them from the edge of the deep ravine. The Shadow saw them clearly in the dark. The Avenger studied them and their positions for a long minute. Then his burning eyes vanished.

The men of CYPHER saw and heard nothing.

The first one suddenly felt fingers of steel on his throat. He opened his mouth to yell, the fingers squeezed a point on his neck, and the soldier slumped unconscious.

The second CYPHER soldier was more alert. He heard nothing, not a sound nor a movement in the dark night around him where he watched the deserted road. But he sensed something, he was alert and wary, checking all around him frequently and irregularly. The last time he turned to be sure no one was to his right, he stared straight into two burning eyes. He gave a short cry before the fingers closed on his throat and he slumped unconscious.

The third one heard the cry, whirled with his sub-machinegun pointed straight at where The Shadow loomed in the dark like a shape of the night itself. Two shots rang out. The third CYPHER man was hurled backwards and sprawled dead on the ground. The Shadow emerged from the dark with his automatics in both hands. He looked down at the dead man who had been hit by both shots straight in the heart. Then he turned and glided silently back to the second CYPHER man.

His eyes blazing like points of fire in the night, the dark Avenger concentrated his powers on the fallen man. He sent the cloud of power to cloud the mind of the black-uniformed soldier in the army of violence-for-hire. The soldier stirred where he lay on the ground. The Shadow's powers reached in like long fingers and took hold of the man's mind. The man came awake. His eyes opened. He looked up at the great, looming black shape of The Shadow. His eyes showed fear. First fear and then anger. And after the anger the man shook his head, looked around, and then smiled at The Shadow.

"You have captured Cranston," The Shadow said. "Where will you take him?"

"Contract headquarters," the soldier said promptly, the white circle of CYPHER clear on his breast even in the dark night.

"You have a prime contract?" The Shadow asked.

"Yes, Class One Contract, full security and protection, Battalion strength," the man answered crisply.

"With whom is the contract?"

The soldier stiffened, then relaxed, but shook his head. "Negative, sir. Such information is not in my class."

The eyes of The Shadow were grim, but not surprised. He had been sure that this CYPHER soldier would, as usual, know no more than his immediate job. However, the man's immediate job might be enough for the purpose of the Avenger.

"Where did they take the others? Contract headquarters?"

"Yes."

"Can you take me to Contact Headquarters? I am under orders from Sub-Commandant Nine," The Shadow said, the powers of his mind forcing the mind of the CYPHER soldier to accept his statement and instantly respond. Once the CYPHER man had accepted the truth of the statement within his mind, the responses then became automatic.

"Yes sir! I can take you to the first gate. I am not programmed beyond the first gate. A Sub-Group Leader will take you to the second gate."

"Very good," The Shadow said. "I commend your discipline. I have my own transport. You will drive."

"Yes sir! !"

"Now!" The Shadow snapped.

The CYPHER soldier jumped up as if he had been whipped. He stood at attention until The Shadow ordered him to the undamaged green car. While the CYPHER man went to the car, The Shadow bent over the other CYPHER soldier who was still alive and concentrated his powers on the man. The man's unconscious mind lay open for the instructions of The Shadow. The Avenger silently impressed his orders on the fallen man's brain: the man would remain asleep for three hours; when he awoke he would remember nothing; he would remain here as if nothing had happened until someone ordered him away. The Shadow studied the man for a moment, and then turned and glided swiftly through the night to the green car. He got in beside the CYPHER soldier who waited behind the wheel.

"Proceed!" the Avenger snapped.

The CYPHER man started the car and drove it off in the night toward the south—away from the direction of the Federal Cybernetics plant! The Shadow's eyes narrowed. Had he been wrong? Was the staff of Federal innocent in the entire affair? Then who was behind it all? Who could afford the price of CYPHER to protect him, and for what? It was undoubtedly CYPHER who had performed the sabotage and the

killings, and CYPHER came at a very high price. What was important enough?

"Faster!" The Shadow commanded.

"Sir!"

The green car jumped ahead in the night. The CYPHER man was a good driver and the small car raced around the mountain curves its lights probing the darkness like long feelers. The highway led south and east and slowly deeper into the high mountains. It was a deserted road, few cars came from the other direction. Suddenly the CYPHER man drove around a long sweeping curve and turned sharply off the road to the left. The green car plunged into a narrow dirt road. The driver was forced to slow down as the narrow side road was rough and rutted. It climbed upward at a steep angle through the dark forest that covered the mountainsides.

"We are near contract headquarters?" The Shadow asked.

"Yes sir. Gate One is not far."

The Shadow sat alert. If he knew the methods of CYPHER, and he did only too well, there would be tight and efficient security methods employed around the first gate. They would have the approaches under surveillance without a doubt. The Avenger hissed to his CYPHER driver.

"Stop before we are in sight of the gate!"

The man blinked, hesitated as if his mind was in a battle between the suspicion such an order gave him and the power of the Shadow that controlled him. Finally he nodded.

"Yes sir!"

Moments later the green car came to a halt. The Shadow looked around. There was nothing in sight but the thick forest of trees, the steep mountainsides, and the empty road that went around a sharp curve ahead.

"First gate is just around the curve, sir!" the CYPHER man said.

"Remain here!" The Shadow commanded.

"Sir!"

The Shadow slipped from the green car and plunged into the dark forest of trees. In the gloom he climbed rapidly upward toward a faint line of lighter black that showed where the top of the mountain was. He reached the top and stood among the trees looking out. What he saw was a vast yet narrow valley set deep among the mountains. All around the crest he stood on, which he now saw was only the crest of a low ridge, were the towering bare

peaks of the great mountain range. Sweeping valleys loomed in the dark. With his night sight he could see the mountains and the valleys as clear as other men could see them in the day. At first, even with his night sight, this was all the Shadow saw.

Then he saw what he had been looking for since the moment he had begun his investigation of the sabotage.

It stood in a deep and narrow side valley off the main valley between the mountains peaks. A narrow side valley hidden from all sides. It was heavily camouflaged. There was a moveable roof, now pulled back, but that could be extended in the day. There were camouflaged buildings set into the base of the mountain around it. Even The Shadow had difficulty seeing it, and in the day, camouflaged, it would have been almost totally hidden unless someone were specifically looking for it.

It was a giant rocket!

The largest rocket The Shadow had ever seen.

It stood on its launching pad, its gantry attached. And at its tip that towered so high above the ground was an unmistakable space capsule! !

A space capsule of the type intended to land somewhere and not simply orbit! ! !

The Shadow had found the reason behind it all.

Someone was launching a private rocket! !

Someone who did not want the United States or The Soviet Union to reach the Moon!

A secret Moon shot! ! !

The Shadow's fiery eyes blazed in the dark. Now it was all clear. The Avenger stared out across the valley to the tall rocket. It was a design he had never seen—bigger and heavier. A powerful space vehicle. And already the fuel tanks were vaporizing in small clouds at the base. The rocket was ready to launch! The Shadow could see that much, his scientific knowledge confirmed it, but he could not be sure of exactly how soon it would go. But it would be soon, and there was no time to waste.

He turned in the night and glided swiftly back down the ridge to the waiting green car. He climbed into the car and his mind was made up. There was not time to make his own way through the CYPHER defenses and find a way to stop the rocket and bring the guilty to justice. There was no time to find Margo, Stanley and Harry and free them on his own. He ordered the CYPHER soldier.

"You have captured Lamont Cranston. There was a fight and one man is dead. But you captured Cranston and have brought him to contract headquarters as instructed. You will remember nothing else. We will drive to the first gate and when you arrive you will be in command of yourself, you will tell them about Cranston, and you will forget everything else."

The CYPHER soldier nodded and started the green car. It drove slowly around the curve and for another quarter of a mile. There the road ended in a dead end at the base of a high cliff. The driver blew his horn. From all around lights blazed on. The black uniforms of CYPHER emerged from the forest and hills all around the car. The seemingly solid wall opened and a tall man in the black uniform of a CYPHER Group Sub-Leader stepped out. It was the same man who had captured Margo, Stanley and Harry. The Sub-Leader walked warily to the green car. He peered in. Then he smiled at the figure he saw sitting beside the CYPHER soldier.

Lamont Cranston sat where The Shadow had been moments before!

The wealthy socialite had his hands bound with a thin cord of the type carried by every CYPHER soldier. He glared in a kind of fear at the Sub-Leader who looked in the car window at him. The Sub-Leader nodded to the CYPHER soldier. His automatics were in the pockets of the CYPHER man.

"Good work," the Sub-Leader said. "He came easy?"

"No," the soldier said. "There was a fight. Number nine is dead. Eight is unconscious back on the road. But I got him."

"You sure did," the Sub-Leader drawled. His cold eyes looked at Cranston. "You were careless, Mr. Cranston. After your lady friend warned you and all. Very careless."

Cranston feigned ignorance and anger. "What the devil is all this? Who are you people?"

The Sub-Leader turned away. "Save it all, Cranston. You think we're amateurs? You think I'm not briefed on you? You know who we are, and you know what it's all about. Now you just sit back and be calm because you're going to join your friends!"

The Sub-Leader made a gesture. Two more CYPHER soldiers piled into the rear of the green car and the car drove off through the gap in the seemingly solid cliff wall. They entered a dark tunnel, and then emerged on the far side on a road that was no more than a narrow track that wound down the mountainside into the small valley. They drove

across the valley floor and were stopped twice by carefully hidden guard-posts—gates two and three! At gate two the driver who had brought Cranston, and the other two soldiers from gate one were replaced by new CYPHER men. As the soldier had told Cranston, he was not cleared to go beyond the first gate. Cranston could not help admiring the efficient security of CYPHER!

At last the green car was driven up to one of the four low, camouflaged buildings that blended into the cliff face. The great rocket towered less than a half a mile away down the narrow and hidden canyon. Even as Cranston watched, men worked feverishly around the towering space vehicle. There was no way of telling how soon the rocket would blast-off, but it was clear that it would not be long. Cranston knew that there was little time to stop what was happening as the CYPHER guards marched him into the building. Inside the building he was pushed along a dim corridor until he knew that he was deep inside the mountain itself. He was turned into a side corridor. A door was opened. Cranston was flung inside where he sprawled on the stone floor in the complete and silent darkness.

The door clanged shut.

Silence.

Cranston sat up slowly. He rubbed his eyes and peered into the black as if he could see nothing—an act in case anyone of CYPHER were watching, which he was sure they were. He pretended to be able to see nothing. But he saw everything clearly.

He saw Margo, Stanley and Harry Vincent seated against the wall in the dark. Cranston sat up. Margo, her eyes accustomed to the dark, saw him now.

“Lamont! How . . .”

Cranston’s eyes warned her to silence. “Yes, Margo, I’m afraid they outwitted me. I’m sorry, It looks like we’re all in the same boat now. Did you see the rocket? It is almost ready to count-down from the look of it. We have to find out just what it is, what they plan to do with it! There is little time.”

The words were innocent enough, but Margo and the others understood what Cranston, or The Shadow, was telling them—that he had allowed himself to be captured so that he could get to the rocket and the people behind it as fast as possible. Margo took up the cue quickly.

“But how, Lamont? We are helpless here!”

Cranston feigned despair. "We have to find a way out! We must learn what is going on!"

There was a sudden low laugh that came from nowhere. A voice that spoke from the stone walls of the cell. Cranston's eyes flashed for an instant. He had been right, of course, they were under secret scrutiny from some hidden point in the walls. The voice spoke hard and yet muffled.

"You will never know, Cranston. Bring them out!"

The door suddenly opened again and five guards entered. They made no sound. They herded Cranston, Margo, Stanley and Harry Vincent out at gunpoint into the dim corridor again. They marched the four agents along many dim corridors deep inside the mountain. The march seemed to go on for a long time. Until at last they were pushed out into a gigantic room carved out of a natural cave inside the mountain.

The room was lighted as bright as day.

The four blinked in the light.

On long rows of chairs they saw what looked like an entire CYPHER battalion. Hundreds of men in black uniforms with the white circle of CYPHER on their breasts. Every one of the men in black was turned to look at them.

One man in the grey tunic and slim blue trousers of a CYPHER General Staff Leader stepped toward Cranston and the others. The gold circle of CYPHER glistened on his breast. He wore the insignia of a Section Director, and the old insignia of a General in the Brazilian Army. He held a long, official paper, and his finger pointed straight at Cranston.

"Turn! Face the court!"

Cranston and the other turned and looked at the other side of the bright room.

Five men in the grey tunic and blue trousers of CYPHER's High Command sat on a row of raised thronelike chairs. Their cold faces stared at the four prisoners. The Section Director who had commanded them to turn spoke once more.

"Court-Martial is in session!"

14

FOUR CHAIRS were brought. Cranston and the others were seated. A CYPHER Group-Leader stood behind each of them. The mass of CYPHER soldiers buzzed behind them. Two men in the uniforms of Area Leaders, the highest non-Staff rank in CYPHER, sat at small tables with stenotype machines to record the proceedings. Cranston watched it all from behind his hooded eyes—it was a full-fledged and rigidly correct military court-martial. And the five men at the head of the room were the judges!

The five sat on their raised thronelike chairs. Four of the chairs were on a level a few feet above the floor of the room. The fifth chair was in the center and raised even higher. On the four chairs that flanked the center chair the grim-faced CYPHER Staff Leaders all wore the insignia of Sub-Commandants. Cranston recognized one of them at once—the big man with the scarred face of combat and the insignia of his former service in the United States Special Forces: Sub-Commandant Nine! Cranston had faced Sub-Commandant Nine once before when The Shadow was Henry Arnaud in a room on an island near Hong Kong! The others he did not know, but he knew their past and their present. They were all Sub-Commandants, with their numbers on their chest and the marks of their old loyalties deserted for the service in the evil and homeless organization of CYPHER. There was Sub-Commandant Two, with the badge of the British Armored Corps. Sub-Commandant Seven, once a Colonel of French Paratroopers. And Sub-Commandant Ten, wearing the marks of a Bulgarian Political Commissar. All four stared stonily at the four prisoners.

In the center, on the highest chair, sat the fifth judge. Cranston watched him closely, more closely than he had ever looked at anyone. He was a tall man with a strong military bearing. He wore the grey tunic and blue trousers and gold circle of CYPHER on his breast. He wore no insignia of former service. A wide gold stripe ran down the leg of his blue trousers. Gold-leaf frogged the peak of his high-crowned military garrison cap designed in the manner of the German General Staff. And he wore a gold mask that covered his entire face! He wore an insignia that Cranston had not seen before in his brushes with CYPHER. But the socialite alter-ego of The Shadow had no doubt who he was looking at. He knew that he was at last seeing the leader—The Commandant of CYPHER himself!

Behind the gold mask the Commandant spoke. "Begin!"

The section Director who held the long, official document snapped a command. "Prisoners rise!"

The four prisoners were pulled to their feet by the Group Leaders who stood behind their chairs. The Section Director read from his paper.

"Prisoner Margo Lane charged with spying actions against CYPHER, and against contract clients in two known cases. Prisoner Lane has attempted to complicate contract presentations, and has seriously impaired efficient discharge of services."

Margo was pushed back down.

"Prisoner of unknown name, designated as chauffeur in this charge. Charged with actions detrimental to contract service."

Stanley was pushed down.

"Prisoner Harry Vincent charged with anti-client actions, and with actions against CYPHER itself in two known contracts."

Harry sat down unaided and sneered at the judges on the high chairs. The Group Leader who guarded him slapped him hard across the face. Blood trickled from Harry's lip. Harry laughed. The Group Leader hit him again.

"Enough," the masked Commandant said quietly. "Proceed with the charge."

Cranston had listened carefully, and now he listened even more carefully to the voice of the Commandant. It was muffled and oddly metallic, and he knew that the Commandant was speaking through a tiny microphone to disguise his voice. And yet there was something familiar to the super-hearing of The Shadow.

"Prisoner Lamont Cranston. Charged with strong un-CYPHER activities. Prisoner Cranston has been involved in three contracts of CYPHER—two which terminated in unsuccessful campaigns! The exact nature of Cranston's involvement is not known. But in each case where he interfered in client contracts, the contract was aborted! In each case there was also involved a man in black who remains unidentified. Cranston is charged with being instrumental in causing failures of two contracts—and with the death of CYPHER members!"

At this charge the whole room buzzed with anger and horror. All eyes turned to Cranston. On the raised dias the four Sub-Commandants looked hard at Cranston. Only the masked Commandant showed no reaction to this obviously ultimate charge. The Commandant leaned back in his throne-like chair.

"How do the prisoners plead?"

Neither of the four spoke. The Commandant nodded.

"Prisoners stand mute. So record it. Is the prosecuting officer ready to proceed?"

"Yes sir," the Section Director who had read all the charges said.

Cranston laughed.

The Commandant's masked face turned slowly to look at the wealthy socialite.

"Something amuses you, Mr. Cranston?" the hollow, muffled metallic voice said.

"Do we have a defense officer?" Cranston said quietly.

"No. It is not in the rules of the court. You are not the wealthy and powerful Lamont Cranston here."

Cranston laughed again. "Rules? What rules?"

"The rules of CYPHER, Mr. Cranston," the masked Commandant said without a hint of amusement. The muffled voice was deadly grim. "CYPHER makes its own rules, Mr. Cranston. CYPHER exists on its own terms, under its own rules. It is the only way to run the world. Our rules are our own, they are rigid. Iron discipline, By our rules anyone who opposes or harms Cypher is automatically a criminal and is so charged."

"That's a pretty old rule," Cranston said drily. "Anyone who opposes you is un-CYPHER, and anyone who is un-CYPHER is a criminal. Very convenient."

"A very old rule, Mr. Cranston. You might say a law of life, a law of nature. The world has always lived by it—the

greatest criminal is the man who harms me, opposes me. All we have done is admit it! We face facts, we face the world as it is!"

Cranston nodded. "To admit it is something, I suppose. But you are evil, all evil! Merchants of violence and death! Sellers of hate and immorality. Caterers to all that is evil and filthy in men! Hucksters of horror!"

The masked Commandant did not move. "We supply only what men want, Mr. Cranston. We offer a service that men will buy! We are realists, Cranston, we know the evil of the world, we do not make it! Now, have you finished your speech? Yes? Then it is so recorded, it will be entered into our record. We will now proceed. You have stood mute. You do not plead to the charges. Actually, it does not matter, of course. Only two charges are of importance. The charge that you have opposed CYPHER, to which you are all obviously guilty. The charge that you have interefered with a CYPHER contract, presentation, or client campaign. To which you are also clearly guilty by simply being here. Obviously a successful service agency such as ours cannot allow failures of services to be on the record unpunished. Our efficiency is our main selling-point. To fail is the only mistake we can make. You have all made us fail in two cases, you are now involved in a third case. Clearly you are guilty."

There was a silence in the massed ranks of the enormous bright room. The Commandant looked to his left and to his right at the other four judges.

"Do the Sub-Commandant judges have any further comments?"

"No," Sub-Commandant Nine said.

The other three shook their heads.

"How then do you vote," the Commandant said.

"Guilty!" . . . "Guilty!" . . . "Guilty!" . . . "Guilty!"

The Commandant nodded. "A unanimous verdict of guilty will be recorded. Sentence will be pronounced by myself, Commandant of CYPHER by due vote and appointment of the General Staff."

There was a complete silence. The two Area Leaders worked their stenotype machines. All eyes were on the Commandant. He sat behind his mask like a rigid and frozen statue. Then, suddenly, he spoke.

"However . . ." and he paused. The room waited. "We of CYPHER are practical, we are realists. Today's enemy is tomorrow's partner. That is the way of the world. Advan-

tage, that is all that counts. So we will make an offer, and ask a question. You four have shown resources. You show skill. We offer you the chance to join us. But . . . first you must answer one question. All four of you, or any one of you. The ones who answer can be one of us."

The Commandant stopped again. Then, "Who is the man in black? How does he operate? What are his powers?"

The four prisoners sat silent.

"Miss Lane," the Commandant said. "You have been seen in close contact with the man in black. He seems to have strange and strong powers. Tell me about his powers, where they come from."

"I expect he will show you himself," Margo said quietly.

"I see," the Commandant said equally quietly. His eyes turned to Stanley. "You, chauffeur! We can offer you far more than you appear to have."

"You can go to hell," Stanley said.

"Very probably," the Commandant said drily. "Mr. Vincent? Tell me about this man in black and his odd powers. Life can be important, it is all you have."

Harry Vincent looked at the floor and said nothing. The cold eyes of the Commandant turned behind the mask to look last at Lamont Cranston.

"You have much to lose, Mr. Cranston. You seem to be most close to this man in black. Where you are, he appears. It is clear that you do not have his powers or you would not be here. But you must know all about him. Tell us, and I will make a man of your skill a Section Director!"

Cranston shrugged. "Turn yourselves in and I will see that you only go to insane asylums!"

There was a sudden roar of anger. The massed CYPHER soldiers jumped to their feet, shouted. The four Sub-Commandants leaped up. The roars of anger filled the enormous bright room. Then the voice of the Commandant, still muffled and disguised, rose above the hubub.

"Silence! Order in this court!"

There was an instant silence. Everyone slowly sat down.

"Discipline! Remember what we are! How dare you react!"

The room was deathly still. The Commandant looked at Cranston. His mask was motionless, but his eyes were cold and hard.

"We are not insane, Mr. Cranston."

"No," Cranston said, "that is the horror."

"Perhaps, Mr. Cranston," the Commandant said. "But we did not make the world or the horror. Will you tell us about the man in black?"

"No, I don't think so," Cranston said.

Sub-Commandant Nine stared at Cranston. "We have ways to make them talk, Commandant. I think we can promise that they will tell us what we want to know."

The Commandant sat back in his throne-like chair and seemed to be studying the four prisoners. His hidden face seemed to be considering, weighing the problem in hand. Sub-Commandant Seven nodded toward the prisoners.

"The woman should crack easily, Commandant. Let us torture them for a time. It should not take long."

The Commandant rubbed his hidden chin thoughtfully. Cranston was studying the man. The tall figure seemed vaguely familiar, and the voice, but both were so disguised that he could not place the familiarity, and without the power of The Shadow to cloud men's minds there was no more that he could do now. That power required the black garb and fire-opal ring of The Shadow. Suddenly, the Commandant stood up.

"No, it does not matter now. The contract is about to be terminated, the campaign to go to its successful conclusion. We will not waste time."

The tall masked Commandant turned and stepped toward a door in the wall of the enormous room behind his throne-like chair. He did not look back.

"Take them out and kill them at once!"

And the tall CYPHER Chief was gone.

Every man in the room leaped to attention. The four Sub-Commandants followed their leader out. The Section Director who had read the charges nodded to a squad of black-uniformed soldiers.

"Take them out! Shoot them immediately."

The squad of soldiers, lead by a Group Leader, marched the four prisoners out of the enormous room and down a new corridor. Each of the soldiers carried a rifle of British make. The Group Leader carried a pistol. It was clearly a firing squad, CYPHER did all in a precise military manner. The Group Leader counted the cadence as the squad marched the prisoners in impeccable order. They went down four or five corridors until they reached one corridor where doors opened off into offices. There was a sudden feeling of air—they were being marched outside! CYPHER did indeed do

everything in a correct military manner. Then, as they reached the last corridor before the door that showed the dark night outside, Cranston suddenly began to moan.

"Halt!" the Group Leader snapped.

Cranston slipped to the floor, crouched there on his knees with his head bent over. He moaned and whimpered. His face had gone deadly white. His eyes that looked up were dilated and rolled wildly.

"Get up, you coward!" the Group Leader commanded.

Cranston moaned, gasped, his skin a terrible greenish-white.

"It's his heart," Margo said to the Group Leader.

The Group Leader laughed. "Hell, it's his guts! Look at him, he's sick with fear!"

At that instant Cranston suddenly gasped and fell over in a dead faint. His breathing was labored. His lips were blue. His skin was a sickly yellow-green. The Group-Leader walked to him and kicked him. Cranston did not move or moan now. His limp body showed no signs of life. The Group Leader began to look worried. He bent down and listened to Cranston's heart. Then he straightened up.

"He's just passed out," the Group Leader. "Take him into the toilet and revive him, and let him vomit his yellow guts! Two of you. Then bring him out. We'll wait for you. We want them all to get it together."

The Group Leader laughed a cold laugh. Two soldiers carried Cranston into the toilet. The Group Leader continued on with the other three and his squad. In the toilet the two soldiers laid Cranston on the floor. One of them went to the sink to get water on a towel. The instant his back was turned, and the second soldier was bending over the stricken Cranston, the right hand of the wealthy socialite shot up like a striking snake and his steel fingers closed on the throat of the soldier bending over him. The soldier made no sound. His eyes bulged, he struggled for one second, and then collapsed. Cranston leaped up. The man at the sink turned, saw the alter-ego of The Shadow, went for his rifle, opened his mouth to yell. He neither yelled nor shot. Cranston was on him before his finger could move on the trigger, before a sound came out of his mouth. A single blow to the throat felled the man. Cranston caught his body and the rifle before they could touch the floor. He laid them both down. He began to remove his clothes.

15

MOMENTS LATER the door to the toilet opened and a pair of fiery eyes peered out. The corridor was empty. But it was bright with light and there were voices and the sounds of machines behind the closed doors of the corridor. A few seconds passed. The fiery eyes watched. The lights in the corridor slowly seemed to dim until they were almost out. There was a sound like a quick rush of wind, and a black shape seemed to float in silence along the dim corridor. The corridor lights came up full again. A CYPHER soldier came out of an office, looked around him for a moment, shrugged, and went back inside. The door from the corridor out into the night closed silently.

Out in the dark night in front of the low building, The Shadow stood for a moment listening. His keen ears heard the sound of the firing squad still marching some distance to the left. Up the narrow side valley the giant rocket still towered, its base steaming with the condensed vapor of its cold fuel. The gantry was still attached, but men no longer worked around the tall space vehicle that reached like some great arrow into the dark mountain sky. Time was growing shorter. The Shadow raced off after the firing squad. Like a great night bird his black shape bounded through the night unseen and unheard with his great cape billowing. He reached the small open field. It was a simple clearing in the forest on the mountain side. It was open on three sides, and the fourth side was a tall cliff.

Margo, Stanley and Harry Vincent were lined up against the cliff wall.

A strong light shone on the three agents of The Shadow.

The firing squad was in position facing them. The Group Leader was looking at his watch, and looking back toward the building where he expected to see his men appear with Cranston. The Group Leader was impatient. But this was a time when iron discipline did not help CYPHER. Ordered to shoot four prisoners, to report the shooting-execution of four prisoners, the Group Leader did not want to shoot three now and one later, did not want to shoot three here and another somewhere else. So he hesitated, looked at his watch, and waited. He waited too long.

In the dark that bordered the field of execution, The Shadow's eyes blazed as he concentrated all his powers on the Group Leader and the men of the firing squad.

The Group Leader rubbed at his eyes and looked up at the sky. He shook his head, looked at his watch. He looked back again toward the distant building where he expected to see Cranston brought out. He scowled and again looked up at the sky. He was looking for the thick fog that seemed to be obscuring his vision. The distant building was clouded in mist. The three prisoners seemed suddenly hazy. Then, all at once, something very strange seemed to happen to the Group Leader. He forgot why he was there in the field. He could not quite remember who the three people against the cliff wall were. He shook his head to remember, but a soft thick cloud seemed to enfold his brain and he could not recall what he was supposed to do with the prisoners. He suddenly seemed to feel that he knew them, that they were friends. A voice, his own voice, spoke to him and told him to release the prisoners. He nodded. Of course, that was what he had to do—release the prisoners.

"Release the prisoners," he heard his own voice say.

Vaguely to his surprise, and then to his approval, three men of his firing squad stepped out and walked to the prisoners. They released the prisoners and walked back to their firing squad line where they stood rigid staring into space. They all seemed to feel that all was in correct order. They made no resistance as the three prisoners walked to them. One of them, Harry Vincent, stepped to the Group Leader and took his pistol. The other two stood near the firing squad that did not move.

The great black shape of The Shadow appeared in the lighted clearing. His fiery eyes blazed toward the firing squad, and his voice was commanding.

"Ready! Aim! Fire!"

The volley rang out.

"Harry!" The Shadow said.

Harry Vincent fired shots into the air from the pistol of the Group Leader. Four shots.

"Four of you step out!" The Shadow commanded.

Four of the firing squad stepped out.

"Remove your clothes."

The four men undressed. Quickly, Margo, Harry Vincent and Stanley changed clothes with three of the CYPHER soldiers. The Shadow threw the clothes of Lamont Cranston to Harry who dressed the fourth guard in Cranston's clothes, and the other three in the clothes of Harry, Margo and Stanley. The fourth uniform went beneath the great black robes of The Shadow.

"Go to the wall and lie down," The Shadow commanded the four CYPHER soldiers now dressed in the clothes of the four prisoners. The soldiers went to the wall and lay down. The Shadow concentrated and rendered them unconscious. The Shadow turned to the Group Leader.

"Take the bodies of your prisoners for burial. Dig graves and fill them again. Do not bury the four. Merely hide them. Then return with your squad, report the executions completed, explain the four missing men, and then forget everything that has happened! You have carried out your orders. The four prisoners are shot and buried. All else is forgotten!"

"The four prisoners are shot and buried. I have sent four men to the squad room to replace their digging tools," the Group Leader said.

"Go now!" The Shadow commanded.

The firing squad picked up the four unconscious men dressed in the clothes of the prisoners and marched off in the night toward the burial ground with the Group Leader smartly counting cadence. The Shadow watched them go. He turned to his three agents.

"Now, Margo and Stanley, you will get off this base and go to find General Rogers, Farina and Bryan. You will tell the General what has happened, and also report to General Broyard. It should be simple to leave the base in those uniforms, you must commandeer some kind of vehicle. Ask General Broyard for help!"

"Yes, Chief," Margo and Stanley said together.

The Shadow's eyes blazed. "Harry, come with me. We have very little time!"

The Avenger, followed by Harry Vincent in the CYPHER uniform, faded into the dark mountain night in the direction of the same building he had just left.

Some five minutes later, the enormous room where the farcical trial had been held was empty and dark. The eyes of The Shadow glowed in the doorway. Harry Vincent stood guard behind him, a CYPHER sub-machinegun in his steady hands. The eyes of The Shadow studied the empty room and the door behind the line of tall throne chairs.

"Come, Harry," the Avenger said softly.

Like a wraith, The Shadow crossed the enormous and empty room in the dark and reached the row of throne chairs. Harry trotted behind him almost as silently. The agents of The Shadow were trained in silence. At the door which the Commandant and his Sub-Commanders had gone through, The Shadow stopped. His burning eyes examined the door while Harry watched the room.

"It is electronically operated, Harry, as I thought," The Shadow said. "I did not see the Commandant use a key or a door knob. Are you ready?"

Harry took a position behind one of the throne chairs from where he could cover the opening behind the door when The Shadow opened it.

"Ready," Harry said softly.

The Shadow nodded. His glowing eyes looked at the door as he focused his powers on the electronic circuit that operated it. There was a faint hum and the door slid open without a sound. A narrow and dark passage stretched out behind the door. The passage was deserted. The Shadow motioned for Harry to follow him and the two men plunged into the passage. The door closed behind them with a sigh.

Ten minutes passed in the silent bowels of the mountain stronghold. The narrow passage had branched into other passages. All were empty. The Shadow and Harry Vincent explored all passages and all the rooms. They found no living person. Then they came to the end of the last passage and entered a room they knew at once was the headquarters of the Commandant. The Shadow's eyes glowed and his finger with the red fire-opal girasol pointed to the corner of the room above the large metal desk.

"Look!" The Shadow said.

On a tall hat tree a uniform hung neatly on a coat hanger.

It was the uniform of the CYPHER Commandant! The golden mask hung with it.

"He's not in his uniform!" Harry said.

"No, Harry," The Shadow said grimly. "I expect he is in the disguise he assumes to show the world. I wondered why he did not wear any national insignia. Unlike all the others, or most of them, he is undoubtedly not a known defector from his country. He is still in good standing in some high position. I think many of the top CYPHER leaders are."

"Where do you think he has gone?" Harry said.

The Shadow's eyes blazed. "I think, Harry, that the rocket will soon blast off. I think he has gone to be with the man or men who hired him—and I think that will be someone in either NASA or Federal Cybernetics! Quick, Harry, there must be some other way out of these passages!"

"Another way?" Harry said, "but why . . ."

The Shadow's fiery eyes shone grimly above the high black collar of his cloak, beneath the wide brim of the black slouch hat. "Because it has not escaped me, Harry, that while the way to this valley by the road is long, the valley is actually just on the other side of the mountain from the Federal Cybernetics plant! I think there is a way from here to the plant!"

"Through the mountain?"

The Shadow nodded. "If I am right, these caves and passages were natural and have only been modified by men. I think the area was chosen for this reason. And if I know CYPHER, the passage will be somewhere near this office of the Commandant. We must . . ."

The Shadow held up his hand for silence. His eyes flickered. He had heard a faint sound. Silently, he motioned for Harry to follow him, and the two men faded into the corner of the office behind four tall filing cabinets. They waited crouched there behind the cabinets.

There was a whirring sound, and a section of the office wall slid open. A man stepped through. Harry Vincent only watched the man who went straight to the desk of the Commandant and seemed to be looking for something. The man opened drawers like a man who knew what he was looking for and how to find it in the desk as if it were his own desk! Harry only watched. But The Shadow's eyes blazed with a certain triumph. He recognized the man at once.

Dr. Max Ernest, Research Chief of Federal Cybernetics!
The Shadow watched Ernest. The Federal Research

Chief found what he wanted, an envelope that was thick with some documents, and closed the drawer he had found it in. He then walked quickly across the room and back through the secret door. The instant the door closed The Shadow came out of hiding and glided swiftly to the wall. Harry Vincent followed him. The Shadow turned to Harry.

"Remain here, Harry, after we go through the door. I think we will find our passage through the mountain, and I want you to cover this end. I don't know where this passage will lead, and it may be a false start. You remain here, and if the Commandant returns, capture him if you can. Let no one back through the passage."

"Right, Chief."

The Shadow concentrated his powers on the panel and the wall slid open. The two men passed through.

They stood in a natural rocky cavern with dim light. Water dripped from some underground source. The cavern was not large, and seemed to extend into a cave at the rear toward the heart of the mountain itself. The Shadow glided swiftly ahead with Harry behind him. They crossed the cavern and entered the cave. Lights lined the walls of the small cave. Just ahead there was a sudden noise. The Shadow bounded forward. Harry hissed as he ran behind.

"Chief!"

Harry pointed down. There was a deep, ditch-like trough in the center of the small cave floor. The trough ran off into the dim and dark distance around a sharp curve. At the bottom of the trough was a single shining steel rail!

"Some kind of monorail train!" Harry panted as he ran.

Ahead the noise turned into a loud whine that grew higher and higher in pitch.

"Stop here, Harry! Be alert! Let no one back this way except myself!" The Shadow commanded.

Harry stopped and blended into the dark against the wall. The Shadow bounded silently ahead with his great cloak flying. The whine had become almost a scream now. The Shadow rounded the curve and his eyes blazed as he saw Dr. Max Ernest standing beside a small torpedo-shaped vehicle that rested on the single rail. The torpedolike car shivered as the whine of its special jet engine rose into a steady scream and then vanished from a sound that could be heard by human ears! The car shivered but became silent to all but the ears of The Shadow.

Dr. Max Ernest stepped into the cockpit of the torpedo-shaped vehicle without seeing the shape of The Shadow that rushed toward him. The jet car began to move. Small, intense flame shot out the rear. In an instant The Shadow estimated the entire situation. The cockpit of the car was in the nose and was blind to the rear. The torpedo back of the car sloped gently down to the engine. The tunnel directly ahead was low, but there was some three feet of clearance. All this The Shadow saw as he bounded up to the slowly moving car.

The car gathered speed.

In seconds it was moving at an incredible rate.

It plunged into the tunnel guided by its single rail.

On its back, out of sight from the cockpit, and between the cockpit and the flaming engine, the black-shrouded shape of The Shadow clung grimly as the car vanished into the tunnel.

Only the steel strength of The Shadow's fingers held him on the smooth back of the torpedo-shaped car on its wild ride through the black tunnel. The walls skimmed by a foot away. The rocky ceiling seemed inches above his clinging form. The jet car raced at a speed close to half the speed of sound. Even at the incredible speed, and clinging precariously, The Shadow saw everything around him and knew that the long tunnel was really a series of natural caverns connected by a few man-made tunnels. Suddenly the sound of the engine fell to the range of human hearing. The car began to slow. It glided into a bright room of concrete walls. It came to a stop at a kind of platform like a miniature train station. Four guards in the uniform of the security force of Federal Cybernetics stood on the platform! They stepped forward to help Dr. Max Ernest from the car. The jet car was in full view, but the guards saw nothing unusual.

There was nothing unusual.

The Shadow, who had slipped off moments before, lurked in the shadows of the lighted room at the mouth of the tunnel. He watched the security guards, and he knew that they were not simple security guards—they were men of CYPHER as he had guessed when he had seen them at the gate earlier that day. They did not see him. They followed Dr. Max Ernest up a flight of stairs without a glance behind. The eyes of The Shadow blazed. Once again CYPHER showed the fatal defect of all iron-discipline organizations—they had no imag-

ination, they did not think for themselves. They had orders and no one had told them to be alert unless they actually saw something suspicious. They took orders, they did not think, and that would be the fatal flaw in CYPHER!

The instant they vanished up the stairs, The Shadow came out of the tunnel and glided silently after them like a wraith from the heart of the towering mountain.

16

IN THE PRIVATE office of J. Wesley Bryan, the small man in the wheelchair waited expectantly. The door opened and Dr. Max Ernest entered. The Research Chief of Federal hurried across the office to where his boss waited. He handed Bryan the envelope.

"There it is, CYPHER's full plan for subsequent operations."

"Good," the crippled scientific genius said, and he wheeled his chair around in a circle and waved his small hands toward the left wall of the office.

The entire wall had slid back to reveal a giant television screen. The television was on, and the picture was a large-screen picture of the giant rocket in the hidden valley on the far side of the mountain! Even as Max Ernest turned to look, vehicles moved away from the mammoth launching pad and the rocket stood alone with its umbilical attached to the tall gantry. J. Wesley Bryan's eyes were bright with a kind of fever as he stared at the picture on the giant screen.

"There, Max! There it is! Almost the end—or the beginning! Yes, the beginning of our glory! Only minutes, Max! Think of it! All our work, the years, the plans, the schemes—and now only minutes and we will be the first men on the Moon! !"

Max Ernest stared at the screen with his boss. The Research Chief licked his lips as he watched. J. Wesley Bryan almost cackled with his excitement.

"Absolute certainty! The Moon will be ours!"

"Yes," Max Ernest said. "It cannot fail. We have made it foolproof—with the help of our unsuspecting friends."

Ernest laughed. Bryan cackled with joy. A voice suddenly spoke from the screen.

"Fifteen minutes and holding. Final communication check. All systems 'go' for on-time launch."

Suddenly, in the silent office where the two men stared at the screen and the giant rocket solitary on its night launching pad on the far side of the mountain, there was a sharp buzzing sound. Bryan jerked alert. The electronic genius pressed a button on his desk. Instantly the door became transparent and Bryan and Ernest saw the figure of a man standing alone just outside the door. The man wore the uniform of a CYPHER soldier. But Bryan peered and swore harshly.

"Cranston! How did he get here?"

"I'll get him," Ernest said drawing a pistol.

"No," Bryan said. "Let him in. Open the door and cover him."

Ernest went silently to the door and flung it open. His pistol aimed at the heart of Lamont Cranston. The socialite, wearing the uniform he had stolen from the Cypher soldier, pretended surprise. He pretended to be both angry and scared. He stepped into the office as if Ernest had him totally powerless.

"What the devil is going on, Bryan? Some men in these black uniforms capture me! They were going to shoot me! I managed to overpower one, steal his clothes, and escape! Now I come here for help, and Ernest has a gun!"

Bryan smiled. "Sit down, Cranston."

Cranston sat, his hooded eyes still pretending to know nothing. But he had seen the screen. Bryan saw him glance at the picture of the rocket.

"Yes, now you know about the sabotage," Bryan said, and the small crippled man snarled. "You don't fool me any longer, Cranston! I have the report of the Commandant! I don't know how you escaped, CYPHER will have to answer for that, but I do know that you are not the innocent amateur and simple businessman that you pretend to be. No, you are much more, and you guessed about me or you would not be here!"

Max Ernest covered Cranston with his pistol. Bryan's eyes glittered, and he cackled with insane laughter. "So you came to stop me, eh!? You fool! No one can stop me! I

have planned far too well! Me! A poor cripple! I will own the Moon!"

Cranston stared at the crippled man in the wheelchair. "You're insane, Bryan." The socialite said quietly, but he was watching the screen where the rocket towered and a voice droned.

"Fifteen minutes and holding. Communications check almost completed. Weapons check completed, all A-okay."

Bryan cackled again. "Insane? No, Cranston, you don't get out of it that easily. I'm not insane. I know exactly and precisely what I am doing. Could an insane man conceive, plan and execute such a project as this?" And the small man in the wheelchair waved his hand again to indicate the gigantic rocket standing on its launching pad in the TV picture.

"Clever, Bryan, but insane," Cranston said. The socialite looked at Dr. Max Ernest who held the gun pointed at him. "Bryan is insane, Dr. Ernest, but you are not. No, you are only a greedy and stupid fool! You are one of those men who do what someone else tells them will make them rich and great. A fool to be led to destruction by a madman!"

Ernest's eyes flickered toward Bryan, and then steadied again on Cranston. But there was a small fear in the Research Chief's eyes behind the pistol. Bryan snarled now at Cranston.

"Madman, eh? Ernest is a fool, eh? Why you stupid poor weakling! Look at that rocket! Have you ever seen such a rocket? No, and neither has anyone else! That is *MY* rocket! With that rocket I will own the Moon! My men will be on the Moon first, and I will claim it and hold it!"

Bryan roared with maniacal laughter. The small man rocked in his wheelchair as his mad eyes glittered and looked at the picture of his rocket waiting to blast-off for the Moon. "Crazy, eh? Was I crazy to use the United States and Russia like the stupid fools they are?" The crippled genius laughed and leaned forward in his wheelchair. "Listen, Cranston! Listen to how crazy I am! I developed the fuel control and a special super fuel that could lift more than man ever dreamed could be lifted into space. But no single man has the money or facilities to do the testing work necessary for such a project. So I *gave* my control to the United States and the Soviet Union! Yes, I gave it to them—*so that they could do all my testing for me!*"

Bryan rocked in his wheelchair with hysterical laughter.

Cranston watched the crippled genius. There it was—the reason! Bryan had cleverly allowed the United States and the Soviet Union to do his testing work for him! So that he could beat them both to the Moon!

Bryan cackled. “With what I learned from the work of NASA and the Soviet Space Authority I improved my fuel control and my fuel—without telling anyone of my continuing work! I made them do the testing, and sabotaged their projects to make sure that my rocket would be the first to go—and it will be! In fifteen minutes my rocket will blast-off and nothing can ever stop me! I have the fuel control and the fuel to send more to the Moon than ever dreamed of. There are five men in that space capsule, Cranston! Five men with arms and food for years! ! Years, do you hear me? Not a few days, not weeks, but *years* they can live up there! The Moon will be mine and CYPHER’s!”

Cranston shrugged. “So you send five men to the Moon. What then? Of what importance . . .”

Bryan roared with laughter. “You fool! Five men on the Moon! Armed! Able to exist for years! With a permanent base developed by me! Supplied by smaller rockets which I have ready, or which I can steal! Armed with rocket weapons that can reach the Earth easily! Remember, Cranston, the Moon’s gravity is so little! A simple Earth rocket, properly fired and orbited around the Earth, can be fired from the Moon with ease and deadly aim! The Moon will be a weapon against the entire world! I will own the Earth! I will rule! Everyone will have to pay me to exist! I will be rich, powerful, and with my wealth I will send more men to the Moon! With the Moon I will control the world!”

There was a sudden silence in the office of the crippled genius as the echo of his mad voice died away. Max Ernest held the pistol steady on Cranston. The giant rocket stood on its pad in the TV picture. All was silent and still. Bryan, his eyes blazing with the vision of his power over the entire world, sat staring at nothing, into space, into the twisted recesses of his own hopes and schemes and ambitions.

Then a clipped voice spoke from the TV screen.

“Fifteen minutes and counting. All systems ‘go’!”

Bryan moved, shifted in his wheelchair, his small and crippled body anxious to leave the confines of the chair but held there forever. The small genius suddenly scowled and looked at Cranston.

“I have no more time to waste. This is my night of triumph!

I don't know how you escaped CYPHER, Cranston, but now I will end it once and for all. Max, kill him!"

Max Ernest hesitated. The Research Chief looked uneasily at his employer. Cranston realized that Dr. Ernest had never shot anyone. It was one thing to threaten, to plan to rule the world, but another to shoot a man who sat in front of you. Max Ernest licked his lips.

"Twelve minutes and counting . . ."

"Max!" Bryan snapped.

Cranston went over the desk in a single motion. With his amazing muscular control, the socialite alter-ego of The Shadow flipped forward from his seat, deftly pulled the single lamp from the desk, somersaulted, and landed on his feet behind the desk.

The room went dark except for the bright blue-white light of the TV screen.

"Shoot!" Bryan screamed.

Max Ernest shot. The shot went wild. Cranston hurled a heavy ashtray into the giant TV screen. It shattered with a loud explosion of vacuum, and the room was black.

There was a sudden silence.

In the dark Cranston saw them clearly. Max Ernest still held his pistol and tried to see into the blackness of the room. He stood not far from the door, his pistol swinging back and forth as he searched for Cranston. Bryan sat in his wheelchair. The crippled genius reached into a compartment of his wheelchair and produced a pair of glasses. Bryan touched a switch on his chair. The crippled man pointed straight at Cranston.

"There, Max, two feet to the left of the TV screen!"

Ernest shot.

The bullet missed Cranston by inches.

The socialite dove for the cover of the desk. He was aware of what Bryan had done. The electronic genius had switched on an infra-red light and put on special glasses that could see in infra-red light. It was a device for seeing in the dark when no one else could see. Bryan had no way of knowing that Cranston could see in the dark with the powers of The Shadow! But unarmed as he was, Cranston was now pinned down by the pistol in the hand of Dr. Ernest. The alter-ego of The Shadow bent close to his ring radio.

"Margo," he whispered. "Margo, come in Margo."

The voice of the beautiful agent whispered back. "Margo here."

"Where are you?"

"With General Rogers and Professor Farina just outside the main building of Federal Cybernetics."

"Make noise, anything! Create a diversion!"

"Roger," Margo said.

The ring radio went silent. Bryan nodded in the dark office toward Max Ernest. "Move around to the left, Max, he's behind the desk. Hurry! The rocket will blast any moment and I must be there to see it!"

Max Ernest started around the room toward the desk. To do this he had to pass the window that overlooked the grounds of the plant. Suddenly there was shooting outside and a wild commotion. Ernest jumped to the window. The Research Director shouted in the dark room.

"Something's wrong down there! I see Farina and that Margo woman of Cranston's! And General Rogers! Someone's shooting!"

"Why?" Bryan cried. "What is it?"

"I don't know," Ernest shouted.

"Quick then! Forget Cranston! Hurry!"

The crippled genius whirled his motorized chair toward the wall. Max Ernest jumped after him. Cranston was up behind the desk. The wall slid open. Bryan's chair darted through with Max Ernest close behind. Cranston raced across the room as the wall slid closed. He hurled himself at the opening, but he was too late. The wall slid closed just as his fingers clutched to stop the panel.

Cranston stood alone in the office. Outside in the plant yard there was firing where Margo and the others were battling the CYPHER men disguised as security guards. Cranston did not have the power of The Shadow to open the wall! Quickly he removed the black garb from beneath the stolen Cypher uniform and put it on. He placed the fire-opal girasol ring on his finger. The slouch hat on his head, the cloak blending into the dark of the office, The Shadow now stood with his blazing eyes concentrated on the wall. His powers focused. The electronic controls activated, and the wall slid open. The Shadow slid through the opening.

But he had lost precious time. His fiery eyes saw the narrow passage and the ramp leading down. He knew where Bryan and Ernest were going, and he bounded down the steep ramp like a great bird of prey with his black wings flying out. He reached the bottom of the ramp and came to an open door. He raced through the door and found

himself in the dim cellar where the jet monorail began. The place where the torpedo-shaped car had been was empty. Far down the tunnel he could hear the high-pitched scream of the engine as it raced back toward the hidden rocket base. The Shadow bent over his ring radio.

"Come in Harry!"

The radio responded instantly. "Harry here!"

"Jet car coming back. Two men. Stop them!"

"Will do," Harry's voice said.

The Shadow clicked off and turned in the cellar. His keen eyes saw what he wanted—a large door at the end of the single track. He reached the door and tore it open. Inside were two other torpedo-shaped jet cars. With superhuman strength The Shadow pushed one car out onto the track and jumped in. It was a matter of seconds for the Avenger to study the controls. He touched a button, pulled a lever, and the engine whined into life.

Seconds later the jet car was racing down the single track with the black shape of The Shadow bent over the controls in the cockpit.

17

THE JET CAR raced through the dark tunnel beneath the mountain. The Shadow drove grimly, his fiery eyes staring ahead into the black. At last he saw the faint light of the cave behind the buildings of the rocket base. He slowed the jet car and glided into the dock at the end of the single rail. He leaped out of the car.

The cave was silent and deserted.

Nothing moved.

They eyes of The Shadow blazed as he searched for a sign of life.

Then he smelled the odor—the smell of gunpowder! There had been shooting in the cave. The Shadow glided across the stone floor toward the larger cavern behind the office of the CYPHER Commandant. Then he saw the body lying on the stone. The Avenger bent and turned the body over. It was Dr. Max Ernest! The Research Director had been shot twice in the head. Ernest was dead. There was the pistol in his hand. The Shadow felt it and found it still hot from being fired. His eyes blazed up. Then he heard the faint voice.

“. . . Chief . . .”

The Shadow floated toward the sound. It came from a dark shadow near the wall of the cave just where it opened into the larger cavern. The Shadow reached the spot and found Harry Vincent propped up against the wall with the CYPHER sub-machinegun in his hand. The agent grinned at The Shadow.

“I’m okay, Chief. I got one of them. The one in the wheelchair fooled me. He had a gun in the chair and he got me.”

“Where are you hit?” The Shadow demanded.

"Right side and shoulder. Not good, but not bad. The bleeding's stopping, I'll be all right. But I've lost some blood. Too weak to move. I . . ."

"Save your strength Harry."

Deftly The Shadow poured some special medicine onto the two wounds and stanching the flow of blood. With instant plastic bandages he covered the wounds.

"You will be all right for a few hours. Do not move! The bullets must be removed but now I must find Bryan. I will return soon, Harry!"

Harry nodded weakly. "I'll be fine, Chief. Bryan went out a different door from the cavern. Over there next to that big oil drum."

The Shadow nodded. He left Harry seated against the wall of the dark cavern smoking a cigarette with his sub-machinegun in his lap ready for any emergency. The dark Avenger moved swiftly across the silent cavern to the oil drum. He saw the outline of the secret door, and focused his powers on the electronic circuit that controlled the door. The door slid open. The Shadow entered a wide and dark corridor, wider than a normal passage and less lighted. He realized that this was some kind of freight passage—probably a passage for bringing materials over from the Federal Cybernetics plant on the other side of the mountain to the launch site. Such a passage would be less travelled, and Bryan had undoubtedly picked it for that reason, and for the convenience of his wheelchair.

There was no sound and no one appeared as The Shadow moved quickly along the freight corridor. He reached a double door and heard the sound of breathing on the other side. Silently he opened the door a crack and his fiery eyes studied the scene on the other side of the door. Two CYPHER soldiers stood on guard with their weapons slung on their shoulders. Beyond them The Shadow saw the interior of a storage warehouse piled with what he knew to be cylinders of rocket fuel and other equipment for the giant rocket reaching the end of its countdown out on the launching pad. The Shadow slipped through the double doors and moved on the two CYPHER men. They heard him at the last instant and turned. They clawed for the weapons slung over the shoulders.

They were too late.

The Shadow was on them in a single bound. His steel fingers closed on their throats. He held one soldier in each

powerful hand and squeezed with his grip of steel. The two soldiers struggled for a frantic moment like fish at the end of a hook. Their eyes bulged with pain and terror. Then they went limp and The Shadow let them drop like sacks of grain to the concrete floor of the storage warehouse. He bent and picked up one of the sub-machineguns, and stood up to study the interior of the silent warehouse. Bryan must have had some reason for coming into the warehouse. The Shadow saw a wide freight door at the far end of the building. To the left there was another wide double freight door. To the right there was a smaller door. Sub-machinegun in hand, the dark Avenger crossed to the smaller door. He opened it silently and went through.

He stood in a small chamber with two doors in it in addition to the door he had come through. The Shadow turned to the left door, opened it, and looked out. He was looking out into the open night valley. A half a mile away the gigantic rocket stood on its launching pad, the vapor-steam of cryogenic temperature fuel steaming in a great cloud from it. Then, as the dark Avenger watched, the umbilical fell away and the gantry began to move back.

The launch was two minutes away! !

The Shadow saw nothing else and no one out in the open mountain night of the secret valley.

He whirled and crossed the tiny chamber to the last door. He opened it and saw an elevator car. He jumped into the car and pressed the automatic button. The door closed and the car started up swiftly and silently. The black-garbed Avenger held the sub-machine gun in his powerful hands and his fiery eyes blazed with impatience. The car went up and up. There was no sound but the low hum of the elevator motor far below. Then the car stopped. The door opened and The Shadow stepped out.

He stood in a brightly lighted room with a wide window to the left that faced the giant rocket a half a mile away.

Three Cypher guards saw him at once. They turned their weapons on him. A loud alarm began to clang and echo.

The Shadow fired a short burst from his sub-machinegun and then another. The three guards went down as if pole-axed by the deadly accurate fire of the Avenger. His sub-machinegun blazing he moved steadily through the bright room toward the larger room he saw just ahead through a heavy glass partition. Four more CYPHER men fell under

the hail of bullets from his blazing gun. When it was empty he snatched up another from a fallen soldier. But it was not the men of CYPHER his fiery eyes watched, it was the room he saw ahead beyond the heavy glass partition!

A room lined with electronic equipment; with gauges and dials; with oscilloscopic units and other equipment even The Shadow could not name instantly. In the room there were three of the CYPHER Sub-Commandants—and J. Wesley Bryan in his wheelchair! All of them were intently watching the instruments and staring out the heavy glass window toward the distant rocket where it towered in the night sky illuminated by searchlights.

The Shadow's eyes blazed—he had found the central launch control room! There were no more CYPHER guards, and the dark Avenger gave his macabre and mocking laugh as he leaped toward the door into the control room.

All the men in the control room whirled and saw The Shadow!

There were a series of loud slamming metal noises. The Shadow stopped.

One by one heavy steel doors came down across all the entrances into the control room.

The Shadow was blocked out of the room.

He leaped at the nearest door and concentrated his powers.

Nothing happened.

He strained with all the power of his brain focused on the heavy steel door that faced him.

The door did not move.

The Shadow now knew that the doors were deadfall doors. They were activated electronically, but once down they were raised not by electronics but by simple mechanical means. The Shadow, alone outside the door, was helpless to raise it!

Inside the room J. Wesley Bryan looked out through the thick glass at The Shadow.

A neutral voice counted, “. . . *twelve . . . eleven . . . ten. . . nine . . . eight . . .*”

The Shadow fired at the window. The bullets bounced off. Inside the room J. Wesley Bryan laughed aloud at The Shadow, his insane eyes blazing with triumph. Behind him the three CYPHER Sub-Commandants watched their instruments and the rocket out on the launching pad.

J. Wesley Bryan watched The Shadow through the thick glass.

The Shadow's eyes blazed and his power reached out through the glass. The fingers of his power reached toward the mind of J. Wesley Bryan. Clouds of his massive will poured toward the crippled genius. Bryan stared back. The crippled man smiled a defiant smile as he resisted the Shadow with all the power of his own brilliant mind. The two men stared at each other. The struggle of powerful wills went on in silence through the heavy glass of the window.

"... seven ... six ... five ... four ...

Behind Bryant the three CYPHER Sub-Commandants tensed over their instruments and stared eagerly out the windows toward the rocket. Great clouds of vapor rose at the base of the tall space vehicle. In the control room J. Wesley Bryan blinked, shook his head, his face going white with fury as he stared at the blazing eyes of The Shadow. The Avenger let his eyes look to the red button no more than four feet from where Bryan sat in his wheelchair. Bryan shook his head. His mouth moved, said, "No ... no ... no ..."

But the hand of the crippled man suddenly moved.

The wheelchair rolled.

The power of The Shadow rose to a massive peak.

Bryan sat in front of the red button. His hand reached out.

"... three ... two ... one ... fire!"

The building rumbled. The grounds shook. Outside through the window the rocket stirred ... lifted ... moved ponderously up toward the dark night sky.

The Shadow's mind gave a silent command. "Now!"

J. Wesley Bryan's face twisted once in a final agony of battle—and his hand reached out and pressed the red button.

The explosion rent the sky.

A great sheet of flame and smoke shot skyward.

Flame burst sideways and down.

The whole valley lighted up like brilliant sunshine.

Great rocks were torn from the steep sides of the narrow valley. Chunks of metal hurled through the blazing night sky. The two buildings closest to the shattered and blazing rocket were smashed and burst into flame. The forest blazed with flames. Farthest from the launch site, the warehouse next to the control building still stood, but flaming debris already had ignited its roof. In the control building the

whole edifice rocked, and the observation windows shattered and blew in.

Through the shattered windows the screams of men could heard all through the flaming valley.

Inside the control room the men had been hurled down.

Outside the control room, The Shadow had been flung to the floor like a puppet.

Stunned only for a second, the black Avenger struggled to his feet. He looked into the control room. The steel doors were still secure. On the floor of the control room the three Sub-Commandants lay unconscious, hurled down and unconscious without the amazing strength of The Shadow.

The Avenger looked for J. Wesley Bryan. For a moment he did not see the crippled genius.

Then he saw Bryan!

By a fluke, a stroke of fate, the low and heavy wheelchair had not been hurled over. It had simply been pushed by the force of the explosion against a far wall. Bryan was uninjured and free now of the power of The Shadow! Even as the Avenger watched, Bryan wheeled away into the open door of a second elevator and vanished. The Shadow turned and ran to the elevator he had come up on. It was damaged by the blast and inoperable. The Shadow dashed for the emergency stairs. He ran down the narrow winding stairs toward the bottom.

He reached the small chamber that had withstood the blast and ran into the warehouse. Flames licked down from the ceiling of the warehouse. In the distance explosions continued to rock the valley as ammunition stores, and stores of other chemicals, exploded. The warehouse was a pandemonium of activity. Hundreds of black-uniformed CYPHER soldiers battled to control the fire in the warehouse before it could reach the stored cylinders of rocket fuel. No one saw The Shadow glide across the room toward the door through which he had entered. Mad with fear, the men of CYPHER and their leaders had no eyes for anything but the fire and the danger. Twice soldiers looked straight at the Shadow as if they did not see him.

He reached the double doors and raced through. The wide freight corridor was deserted. He ran on and reached the secret panel. His powers focused and opened it. He ran into the large cavern and on toward the smaller cave where the jet car was—it was the only escape for J. Wesley Bryan,

the crippled man had to be trying to reach the car. The Shadow reached the smaller cave.

"Bryan! Stop!"

The Shadow heard the shout. It was the voice of Harry Vincent. The Shadow reached where Harry lay flat on the stone floor with his sub-machinegun extended and a new wound on the side of his head. Harry did not look around as The Shadow bounded to him.

"Stop! Now!" Harry shouted.

The fiery eyes of The Shadow looked in the direction of where Harry's gun was pointed. He saw a scene like a slow-motion movie.

J. Wesley Bryan sat in his wheelchair beside the toroedo-shaped jet car. The crippled genius had started the engines. Now he struggled to raise himself from the chair and lower himself into the cockpit. He was half out of the chair, the engines up to a high whine, when Harry Vincent fired a burst from the sub-machinegun. The bullets must have struck the controls of Bryan's chair. Without warning the chair lurched, began to roll toward the rear of the jet car. Bryan was flung back into the seat of the chair. The small crippled man beat at the jammed controls. His face was a mask of fear. The chair rolled to the rear of the jet car, lurched, and pitched over into the track directly behind the flaming jet engine.

The agonized scream of J. Wesley Bryan echoed through the hidden underground caverns deep inside the mountain.

Then there was silence.

Harry Vincent lay on his face, his eyes sick.

The Shadow glided forward and stood over the charred remains of Bryan and his smoldering wheelchair. Then the dark Avenger reached down and shut off the jet car engine. The cave became totally silent. The Shadow moved back to where Harry now sat up again.

"He surprised me again. Grazed my head. Superficial, but it stunned me a moment," Harry explained. The agent was clearly weak from the loss of blood.

"Rest, Harry," The Shadow said. "It is over. The rocket was destroyed. The CYPHER base is a ruin. I do not think they will have much fight left tonight."

The Avenger bent over his ring radio. "Come in Margo!"

There was a silence, and then Margo's clear voice. "Margo reporting, Chief."

"Report," The Shadow intoned.

"Troops from the nearest Air Force Base have arrived at the plant and have the situation under control. Troops were despatched under orders of General Broyard when I contacted him as soon as we left the CYPHER rocket base."

"Very good, Margo. Were all the CYPHER men captured?"

"Negative," Margo reported. "A strong unit made its escape by the highway, is presumably heading for the rocket base. General Broyard's commander here is reluctant to advance over the mountains in his helicopters in the face of the battalion size strength we reported to be at the rocket site. However, we heard the explosion, it shattered all our windows. What is the situation there?"

"There will be little resistance here, Margo," The Shadow said drily. "The base is destroyed, the troops scattered and demoralized. Tell the commander he can come in by helicopter and should beat the unit that escaped here."

"Very well, Chief," Margo said.

"Are you all safe?" The Shadow asked.

"Stanley is wounded, but I am unhurt. However, Professor Farina and General Rogers are missing. Farina is in the hands of the CYPHER unit, and probably Rogers, too, but we are searching. Most of the workers here seem uninvolved."

"Very good, Margo. I will await you here."

The Shadow clicked off and stood for a moment in the dim cave with his eyes blazing. Then he raised his head to listen. Far off he heard a faint sound. It was the high whine of one of the jet cars. A whine too high for anyone but The Shadow to hear. The eyes of the Avenger gleamed. Someone was coming!

"Harry," The Shadow said.

But the agent had finally fainted from the effect of his wounds and the loss of blood. Quickly, The Shadow carried the unconscious man into a safe shelter in the cavern, ran to the secret door into the office of the CYPHER Commandant, and vanished through into the office.

18

IN THE DARK office of the CYPHER Commandant nothing moved. Far off, faint and barely heard, were the screams of dying men out in the holocaust of the flaming valley. From time to time heavy explosions rocked the mountain. Once there was a violent shock that rattled all the cabinets in the dark and silent office. The storage warehouse nearby had exploded. Screams of the trapped and maimed echoed louder. But nothing happened in the office deep inside the rock of the mountain.

Then there was a light sighing sound. The secret panel had opened and closed. Someone stood in the dark room. A tall shape that did not hesitate an instant, but strode quickly and directly to the large metal desk. The figure did not turn on any light but opened a drawer unhesitatingly and took out a key. The figure then strode to the wall, touched a button, and a panel slid back revealing a safe. The man opened the safe with the key and a combination. He reached in and withdrew an envelope and a small attache case. He then closed the safe and went to the desk where he turned on the desk lamp. In the small circle of light that cast shadowy glooms in all the corners of the office the man spread out the papers he had taken from the safe. He took another envelope from his pocket and spread out the papers from it. For a few minutes he studied all the papers, nodded, and replaced them all in one envelope. He opened the attache case and took out packets of money. He counted the number of packets of bills, again nodded, and returned them to the attache case. Then he closed the case and stood listening for a moment to the distant sounds of

death and destruction. A faintly mocking smile played across his face. He again opened the attache case and strode to the hat rack in the corner. He took down the mask and the uniform of the Cypher Commandant and carried them to the attache case. He began to fold them and place them inside the case.

The low laugh echoed through the dark room. An eerie, macabre laugh.

"Who is there!" the man snapped. A pistol suddenly leaped into his hand.

The laugh came again—a cold, mocking laugh.

"I have destroyed your entire operation, do you think you can stop me now with a pistol, General Rogers! !"

The tall Air Force Brigadier and Special Aide to the President looked hard all around the room. He saw nothing. Then there was an expression of sudden understanding on his face.

"The man in black!" Rogers said quietly.

There was a movement of the gloom in a corner of the office, and the burning eyes of The Shadow appeared. The red glow of his fire-opal girasol illuminated his face and hawk-nose beneath the black slouch hat and above the high collar of his black cloak that faded away into the gloom.

"Yes, General Rogers, the man in black—The Shadow! I know the evil that lurks in the hearts of men! And I know that you are the Commandant of CYPHER!"

Rogers held his pistol steady and aimed at the shadowy shape and blazing eyes. The tall General shrugged.

"I don't see how I can deny it now. Yes, I am proud to say that I command CYPHER! I alone command an organization of true men who will someday be honored by history as men who faced reality, who knew where true values lie!"

The Shadow nodded. "I should have seen it. You, and you alone, really could have had Major Oates killed!"

Rogers smiled. "Ah, yes, Oates. The fool was getting a little too close to the truth. I had to kill him and at the same time throw a little suspicion on our Soviet friends, eh? But I didn't really fool you, did I—Cranston! !"

There was a silence in the office as the two men faced each other. Rogers laughed again. Rogers had guessed the secret of The Shadow.

"You see, two can play at this game. It is now clear to me that you and Cranston are one and the same! A good

cover, that mild Lamont Cranston, the amateur crime-fighter. But only Cranston really could have known I probably killed Oates. I knew that you were getting too close when you told that fool Broyard of your suspicions about Federal and the Idaho plant. That . . .”

“That was why you let Farina find the sabotage of the fuel control, and why you pretended suspicion of Federal. You knew that I might find something here, and you wanted to lead me to capture! You set a trap for me and my agents.”

“Of course,” Rogers said. The eyes of the General glinted. “It was a magnificent project! To own the Moon! CYPHER! Our Moon! Bryan was useful, of course, but it would have been our Moon!” Rogers seemed to be seeing a vision. Then his eyes clouded. “And you have destroyed it! This time you will not oppose us again!”

The Shadow mocked. “I have destroyed the project, and I have destroyed Bryan and Ernest, and now I will destroy CYPHER! The weed of crime bears bitter fruit, Calvin Rogers!”

Rogers laughed. “You fool! I have you now! You are only another weakling who cannot understand the necessity of power and strength! Weak like our mollicoddle Government, as weak as all the stupid Governments everywhere! A dreamer of peace when the law of life is battle and war and death! No, you will not stand in our way again! You are a clever, but you are not that clever. Even you cannot escape a bullet at this range!”

The eyes of The Shadow were points of fire as the dark Avenger stared at Calvin Rogers. “You have betrayed your country and your President, Calvin Rogers. You have betrayed your home and your world. You have betrayed your duty to all men! You are incarnate evil, Calvin Rogers, far worse than the poor men you lead to hate and destruction! Bryan was insane, and your men are only blind, but you are sane and you are not blind! Now you will tell me all I must know about CYPHER to destroy it once and for all! You are the Commandant, you will tell me everything!”

Rogers’ eyes narrowed and the pistol pointed up an inch. Then the renegade General smiled a wolfish smile. “You have nerve, Shadow. That I grant you. You have a lot of courage and a lot of strength. Perhaps I will not kill you. You are clever and you have powers that we can use. Join us! You are not one of these stupid weaklings who will not face life as it is!”

The Shadow's voice cut like a knife. "Do not insult me by trying to make me as evil as you, Calvin Rogers! The world will never be free as long as men like you exist! You must die, but first you will tell me what I must know to destroy all of CYPHER!"

Rogers went pale. Then the CYPHER Commandant's lips curled in a savage snarl. For an instant his face was the face of a wild beast, the face that man must have had once so many millions of years ago when he roamed the jungles living by his teeth and his claws and death of others for his food. The snarling savage face of man eons ago before he had even grown into a human savage in the jungle, when he was still only another animal who knew nothing else. That man of millions of years ago knew no more, but Calvin Rogers did! Knew and denied! And now he snarled as his unknown ancestors had and raised his pistol in the joy of hate and destruction.

"Stop!" The Shadow commanded.

Rogers laughed. Rogers blinked.

"You cannot fire, Calvin Rogers!"

Rogers shook his head.

"You will now tell me all I want to know!"

Rogers stood motionless. The power of The Shadow flowed into the brain of the renegade General. Rogers made no motion. The Shadow felt the brain of the CYPHER Commandant go limp. For one instant the brain receded from his probing power. Only an instant of total non-resistance. But it was enough. In that instant Rogers gained a second of his own will. Not time to shoot at the vague and half-seen shape of The Shadow. Not time to escape. But the time to turn the pistol upward.

The single shot rang out in the silent room of the office.

Calvin Rogers was flung backwards by the force of his own shot.

The General fell against the wall and slipped to the floor. His head was blown off at the rear. He was dead. Killed instantly by his own shot, the dead man sat against the wall and there was a smile on his thin lips.

The Shadow stood and looked down. Rogers had escaped him. In one instant of will Rogers had displayed again the evil power of CYPHER. An evil power that would not easily be stamped out of the world. Because Rogers, and CYPHER, were right in one deadly way—there were always men of evil

to hire them, and always men of evil to serve them! The Shadow's eyes flamed bitterly as he looked down at the dead General and knew that his task was not ever going to be an easy task.

But once again The Shadow had stopped CYPHER, and perhaps the day would come when CYPHER would die because there was no one left to pay them for their services of violence and crime. Some day. And until that day The Shadow would be there to defeat each single project of destruction.

Now he raised his head again and listened. He heard distant firing and the faint sound of helicopters. The soldiers of General Broyard had arrived. It was time for The Shadow to vanish once again until he was needed for another work of peace and justice.

The black-cloaked figure faded away into the gloom of the office and was gone.

In the Administration Building of NASA Utah Base, Major-General Broyard sat behind his desk with the envelope of papers in front of him. Dr. Cassill sat near him. The General and the Senior Scientist both smiled at the three people before them. Broyard tapped the envelope.

"Cassill tells me that these documents are the plans for the improved fuel control, and the formula for Bryan's super fuel. They are invaluable, Cranston, we must thank you!"

"Don't thank me," Cranston said. "It was Harry Vincent there who stopped Rogers and found them. It seems that Rogers knew their value too."

"Then our thanks to Mr. Vincent," Broyard said.

Harry, bandaged and still pale from his ordeal, only smiled. Margo Lane touched the arm of the wounded agent and nodded to General Broyard.

"We are just glad that we were able to help," Margo said.

Broyard frowned. "Of course, you understand that none of this can ever leave this room. Rogers was too close to the President. Officially it will be reported that he died in an accident, a plane crash. We have managed to explain that big explosion as the Federal Plant exploding in an industrial accident. It also explains the deaths of Bryan and Ernest. I understand that the Russians are saying that Vaslov and Derian died in one of those plane crashes, too. None of it must ever get out. We have decided to share all the new plans and formulas with the Soviet."

"Very wise," Cranston said quietly. "The only way to defeat men like Bryan and their dreams of power is to cooperate openly and give them no chance."

"True," Dr. Cassill said. "You were very lucky to escape that holocaust, Cranston."

"Fortunately," Cranston said, "I was in an underground cell in the mountain where Broyard's men found me."

"Yes," Broyard said. "We rounded up most of the survivors. CYPHER, you called them? We can't get a thing out of them. Except for a few wounded and stunned, they had all vanished. I don't understand what their role was in this? It was Bryan's grab for the Moon."

"They simply worked with him," Cranston said quietly. He did not want to reveal how much he knew about CYPHER.

General Broyard nodded slowly. "Well, we'll have to watch for them again. At least, this time we won. Rogers! I simply cannot understand it. Rogers and Bryan, a genius like that." The General shook his head sadly. Then he looked up at Cranston, Margo and Harry Vincent. "One other thing I don't understand. The few survivors we found all talked of a shadow, a giant moving shadow that attacked them. None of you saw it, or him, or whatever it was?"

"No," Cranston said.

Margo smiled. "The Moon creates many shadows, General. They must have seen Moon shadows."

"Yes," Broyard said, and slowly shook his head.

In the quiet office of the NASA Base Margo and Harry Vincent showed nothing on their faces. For one instant, the hooded eyes of Lamont Cranston flashed, and then he only smiled at Broyard and Cassill.

THE END

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